

UNK GENERAL STUDIES ASSESSMENT INSTRUMENT  
Portal Courses

**LEARNING OBJECTIVES:**

At the conclusion of their Portal course, students should be able to:

- 1) Analyze critical issues confronting the individual and society, including a global context.
- 2) Interpret an argument through engaged discourse within the discipline.
- 3) Construct a cogent argument pertaining to the course topic.

The purpose of this assignment is to evaluate whether or not these learning objectives have been met. The basics of this assignment are common to all the General Studies Portal courses taught at UNK. Your professor may give you additional instructions that tailor the assignment specifically to your course, such as specifying a different length or specific concept you are to discuss.

Instructors can choose from one of the 6 options to assign to the students:

**Portal Course: Common Assessment Options**

**Option 1: Integrated Summary**

Instructor provides students with 3-4 articles targeting a specific course concept, phenomena or theory<sup>1/</sup>. From these articles, students are instructed:

- Your task is to show a critical understanding of the literature relevant to XXX. From the articles provided, select the articles that are most relevant to furthering our understanding of XXX. Using the selected articles, write an integrated summary that demonstrates a critical understanding of XXX within the context of the discipline. Your summary should include a brief overview of XXX and an integrated discussion of the selected articles. The entire integrated summary should be 2-3 double-spaced pages (not including title or reference page) and should be written in a style appropriate to the discipline.

<sup>1/</sup>Assignment could be specifically tailored to address cultural issues or civic engagement by the nature of the articles selected. If targeting cultural issues, the following directions could be added to the assignment:

- Your summary should include a brief overview of XXX, an integrated discussion of the selected articles, and an analysis of the cultural issues of XXX within a global context.

If targeting civic engagement, the following directions could be added to the basic assignment:

- Your summary should include a brief overview of XXX, an integrated discussion of the selected articles, and an analysis of XXX as it applies to civic engagement / democracy in a modern society.

***Target GS Program (GS) learning outcomes: GS 1; GS 2; GS 4; GS5<sup>1/</sup> and GS 6<sup>1/</sup>***

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**Option 2: Current Event Analysis**

Instructor selects a current event relevant to issues, concepts or theories targeted in the class<sup>1/</sup>. Students are given the current event topic and instructed:

- Your task is to analyze XXX using the theories, concepts and ideas learned in this class. Using both the Internet and your textbook as a resource, you should identify three credible, reliable references from which to base your analysis. Your analysis should demonstrate a critical understanding of XXX as it relates to the discipline; clearly show how selected course concepts and theories can be used to inform our understanding of XXX. Your analysis should be 2-3 pages double-spaced (not including title or reference page) and should be written in a style appropriate to the discipline.

<sup>1/</sup>Assignment could be specifically tailored to address cultural issues or civic engagement by the nature of the current event selected. If targeting cultural issues, the following directions could be added to the assignment:

- Your analysis should demonstrate a critical understanding of XXX as it relates to the discipline and our global society; clearly show how selected course concepts and theories can be used to inform our understanding of XXX and highlight cultural issues of XXX within a global context.

If targeting civic engagement, the following directions could be added to the basic assignment:

- Your analysis should demonstrate a critical understanding of XXX as it relates to the discipline and our democratic society; clearly show how selected course concepts and theories can be used to inform our understanding of XXX and highlight XXX as it applies to civic engagement / democracy in our modern society.

**Target GS Program (GS) learning outcomes: GS 1; GS 2; GS 4; GS5<sup>1/</sup> and GS 6<sup>1/</sup>**

### **Option 3: Controversial Issue Analysis**

Students are instructed:

- As you know more about XXX (discipline name), you discover that there are many issues and topics in which even the experts can't agree. Take the controversial issue provided by your instructor and find two reliable, credible sources on each side of the controversy and write an integrated summary to show the research and findings for both sides of the debate. In addition, you should provide a critical analysis of the support for each position to formulate (and share) your own informed position on the controversy. Your analysis should be 2- 3 pages double-spaced (not including title or reference page) and should be written in a style appropriate to the discipline.

<sup>1/</sup>Assignment could be specifically tailored to address cultural issues or civic engagement by the nature of the discipline; some courses or topics may lend themselves to controversial issues that are directly tied to cultural awareness and/or civic engagement. In addition, assignment could be modified in which the instructor selects the controversial issue to ensure that it targets one of these dimensions.

<sup>2/</sup>Assignment could be modified to be an oral debate in which students are assigned to one side of a controversial issue and must be able to support and defend their position in a live debate format.

**Target GS Program (GS) learning outcomes: GS 1; GS 2; GS 3<sup>2/</sup> GS 4; GS5<sup>1/</sup> and GS 6<sup>1/</sup>**

### **Option 4: Research Proposal**

Instructor selects a basic research article that is appropriate to the discipline. Students are given the article and instructed:

- Read the article XXX and reflect on the value of the study as well as the meaning and significance of the conclusions. Your task is to propose a follow-up study to either: 1) address flaws, shortcomings or weaknesses of the original study; or 2) expand the original findings by furthering our understanding of the relevant issues. Your proposal should briefly justify your rationale for the target of the follow-up study, provide a clear hypothesis and outline the relevant methodology and considerations necessary to implement your follow-up study. You should use language and methodologies relevant to your discipline. Your proposal should be 2- 3 pages double-spaced (not including title or reference page) and should be written in a style appropriate to the discipline.

Assignment could be specifically tailored to address cultural issues or civic engagement by the nature of the article selected; some articles/topics/disciplines may lend themselves directly to studies that are tied to cultural awareness and/or civic engagement.

<sup>1/</sup>In addition, a component of the analysis could directly ask students to address the issue of cultural bias as a component of the selected research article.

<sup>2/</sup>Furthermore, if relevant, students could be asked to directly discuss the relevance to civic engagement by addressing the value of the research findings for social change or societal impact.

**Target GS Program (GS) learning outcomes: GS 1; GS 2; GS 4; GS5<sup>1/</sup> and GS 6<sup>2/</sup>**

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**Option 5: Community Introspection**

Students are instructed:

- The world in which we live is complex interaction of social, political, and interpersonal forces that are shaped by our understanding of science, history and art. Your task in the community introspection is to select one social policy, law or community practice that can be linked back to your understanding of XXX (discipline). In your introspective report, you should discuss the relationship between XXX and relevant social policy/law/practice, highlight ways to use your knowledge about XXX to impact civic action and reflect upon your role in civic life, politics and government. Your introspection should be 2- 3 pages double-spaced (not including title or reference page) and should be written in a style appropriate to the discipline.

<sup>1/</sup>Assignment could be modified to integrate cultural awareness issues by adding the following:

- In your introspective report, you should discuss the relationship between XXX and relevant social policy/law/practice, highlight ways to use your knowledge about XXX to impact civic action, articulate an awareness of cultural bias, relevance or perspective, and reflect upon your role in civic life, politics and government.

**Target GS Program (GS) learning outcomes: GS 1; GS 2; GS 4; GS5<sup>1/</sup> and GS 6**

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**Option 6: Media Analysis**

Instructor selects a topic addressed in the global media community that is relevant to course concepts, issues or theories. Students are instructed to:

- Utilizing your textbook and the Internet as resources, your task is to find two different cultural perspectives as indicated by media reports about XXX. You will conduct a web search for XXX and find relevant, reliable media reports that represent different cultural perspectives surrounding the target issue. Compare and contrast how different cultural perspectives describe XXX then critically apply course concepts to highlight how the academic community in our culture understands the issue. Your media analysis should be 2- 3 pages double-spaced (not including title or reference page) and should be written in a style appropriate to the discipline.

<sup>1/</sup>Assignment could be modified to address civic engagement depending on the nature of the topic selected.

**Target GS Program (GS) learning outcomes: GS 1; GS 2; GS 4; GS5 and GS 6<sup>1/</sup>**