

Report of the FS/GSC 300/400 Level Inclusion Committee

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Rationale:

The Committee finds that some of the objectives of the General Studies Program, as outlined in its philosophy statement in the catalog, can best be met in advanced courses. Specifically, these objectives include encouraging "students to become aware of the relationships which exist among the disciplines" and to "apply the knowledge gained to . . . contemporary problems in the students' natural, social, economic, and political environment." An understanding of the relationship between the disciplines is predicated upon an understanding of the disciplines. Hence, these goals are best attained near the end of a student's General Studies program. Further, the application of knowledge to a variety of interrelated problems requires a measure of intellectual maturity that may not be attained by freshmen and sophomores. Thus, the committee concludes that the introductory and survey components of the General Studies program would be complemented by those that are integrative and synthetic.

Committee members agreed that, insofar as 400 level courses are often offered with an 800 level graduate component in many departments, only 300 level courses should be eligible for inclusion in the General Studies program.

The most logical place for the inclusion of 300 level courses is in the as yet undeveloped Capstone Course Requirement. The explicit Capstone Course objectives, particularly the requirement that students "demonstrate the ability to use the breadth and diversity of knowledge and experience from a variety of disciplines in order to solve real world problems," restates the goals of interdisciplinary and applied knowledge introduced in the General Studies Philosophy.

Thus, the committee recommends that 300 level courses be approved for General Studies only if they meet the recommended criteria for Capstone Courses.

Criteria:

- 1) Capstone Courses must be interdisciplinary. Ideally, this means they should be team taught by faculty with expertise in different disciplines. Minimally, Capstone Courses must use the theory and methodology of two or more disciplines. An appropriate test for the Capstone Course designation would be that the course, upon the recommendation of the appropriate departments, was judged appropriate by the General Studies Council for inclusion in two General Studies categories.
- 2) Capstone Courses should be structured in such a way that students must work independently, relying largely on their own resources and abilities, to find solutions to a problem or to complete a project. Examples of independent work include structured laboratory research in the sciences, independent research projects in the humanities and social sciences, and creative work or performance in the arts. Collaborative work, initiated, planned, and carried out by students, meets this criteria for independent work.
- 3) Capstone Courses should also combine breadth and depth in such a fashion that the examination of problems requires:
 - a) Gathering and assimilating different kinds of information. This may include sources from different disciplines, qualitative and quantitative information, or visual and literary information.
 - b) Discriminating between different kinds of information and assessing the value and relevance of various data, arguments, and theories.

- c) Making sound decisions based on various scientific, ethical, aesthetic, economic, and political criteria of judgment.
 - d) Communicating knowledge through effective writing and speaking.
 - e) Synthesizing knowledge and interrelating disciplines. The disciplines involved should represent clearly distinct world views, epistemologies, and value systems. Examining alternative world views, belief systems, and value systems with respect to their assumptions and consequences.
- 4) Capstone Courses should examine "real world problems" and be directed towards teaching students to "function responsibly" in their "natural, social and political environment." For example, a Capstone Course might emphasize technology (genetic control, information access, life support systems, pollution, population density, or transportation are all possibilities) and its impact on the natural environment, social institutions, human behavior, and culture. Alternatively, a Capstone Course might explore the problems and possibilities of multi-ethnic societies, paying special attention to the interplay of languages, collective memories, and religions in the context of economic and political inequality and the struggle for human rights.
- 5) Capstone Courses should have no specific prerequisites. However, since they assume a certain measure of intellectual maturity and common frame of reference, they should be open only to students who have completed most (36 hours) of their General Studies Program.
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Additional Recommendations:

1. Proposals for Capstone Courses should be submitted to the General Studies Council, and evaluated by a process determined by the Council.
2. The General Studies requirement in the Capstone Course category should be changed from 0-1 to 3 hours.
3. Capstone Courses may be concurrently offered in the various departments that create them. A course in cross-cultural family values, for example, jointly created by Philosophy and Family and Consumer Sciences might be offered with a PHIL, a FCSC, and (if deemed appropriate) a Capstone prefix. Subject to the approval of the General Studies Council, a Capstone Course may also count towards fulfilling the General Studies requirement in the appropriate category or categories in which it is cross-listed.