

Intellectual Foundations Program: FAU's General Education Curriculum

FAU believes that higher education should go well beyond the preparation of individuals for demanding careers in their chosen fields. It should also provide broad intellectual enrichment through systematic exposure to a diversity of academic experiences. The purpose of the general education curriculum in this endeavor is to develop the intellectual skills, habits of thought, ethical values, and love of learning that transcend the choice of major. These are the hallmarks of educated men and women capable of meeting effectively the social, political, and economic challenges of contemporary life. Perhaps at no other time in history has a well-rounded, inquiring intellect been more important and useful than in the world of rapid technological change and ever increasing globalization in which we now live. Thus, the mission of a comprehensive university education is to produce graduates who can intelligently analyze information, appreciate diverse peoples and ideas, and adapt to change through the self-motivated acquisition of new knowledge.

Consequently, the FAU general education curriculum is a carefully devised program that draws on many subject areas to provide and reinforce essential skills and values from different points of view. It equips students with the academic tools they will need to succeed, not only as undergraduates in their degree programs but also as responsible citizens in a complex world. ***The courses that comprise the FAU general education curriculum combine to develop:***

- 1. Knowledge in several different disciplines;***
- 2. The ability to think critically;***
- 3. The ability to communicate effectively;***
- 4. An appreciation for how knowledge is discovered, challenged, and transformed as it advances; and***
- 5. An understanding of ethics and ethical behavior.***

Students are invited to select from a number of courses, all at the lower-division level, in completing their general education requirements. All of the courses contribute to meeting the overall goals of the general education curriculum, thereby allowing flexibility in making individual choices. Students must complete a minimum of thirty-six credit hours of general education coursework, distributed as indicated in the six categories below.

Students who enter FAU as freshmen or as transfer students with fewer than 30 credits must fulfill the University's general education curriculum requirements as described below. A course may be used to simultaneously satisfy a general education curriculum requirement and a requirement of the student's major program. All course selections should be made in consultation with an advisor.

I. Foundations of Written Communication (6 credit hours)

Learning to communicate effectively is much more than the putting of thoughts and ideas into words. Writing, in particular, allows us to develop and organize our thoughts and ideas in intelligible and meaningful ways. Effective communication involves the examination of evidence, the development of ideas, and the clear expression of those ideas. Communication also involves the application of ethical standards when using words or ideas that are not one's own. Courses that fulfill this requirement are designed not only to develop students' writing skills but their ability to think critically -- to question habitual ways of thinking, to move beyond obvious responses, and to develop new ways to see themselves and the world around them.

Students who complete the Written Communication requirement will be able to:

- 1. Produce clear writing that performs specific rhetorical tasks;***
- 2. Respond critically to a variety of written materials in order to position their own ideas and arguments relative to the arguments and strategies of others;***
- 3. Use writing not only to communicate but also to think critically -- examining assumptions that underlie the readings and their own writing;***
- 4. Demonstrate an understanding of the ethical standards that apply to the use of external sources in one's writing.***

II. Foundations of Mathematics and Quantitative Reasoning (6 credit hours)

Mathematics is a peculiarly human endeavor that attempts to organize our experience in a quantitative fashion. It aids and supplements our intuitions about the physical universe and about human behavior.

The Mathematics and Quantitative Reasoning requirement is intended to give students an appreciation of mathematics and to prepare them to think precisely and critically about quantitative problems.

Students who satisfy the Mathematics and Quantitative Reasoning requirement will:

- 1. Demonstrate an understanding of mathematical theories and their applications;***
- 2. Be able to identify and apply mathematical concepts most appropriate to solving quantitative problems.***

III. Foundations of Science and the Natural World (6 credit hours; two courses, one with a lab, from two different departments)

Scientific principles are behind what we find in nature and in natural occurrences. Scientific issues, such as those dealing with stem-cell research, cloning, and global warming, are hotly debated by policy makers.

Courses that meet this requirement share the goal of seeking to understand patterns and principles behind phenomena and occurrences, both in the inorganic world and in the living world. They typically fall within either the physical sciences (Astronomy, Physics, Chemistry, and the Earth Sciences) or the Biological sciences.

Students who satisfy the Science and the Natural World requirement will demonstrate:

- 1. An understanding of the nature of science, including important principles and paradigms;***
- 2. An understanding of the limits of scientific knowledge and of how scientific knowledge changes;***
- 3. An understanding of the nature of scientific inquiry and its ethical standards, in particular how to pose questions and how to develop possible explanations;***
- 4. An ability to discern claims based on rigorous scientific methods from those based on illogical or incomplete scientific methods.***

After completion of the associated lab, the student will:

- 1. Demonstrate an understanding of how experiments are conducted;***
- 2. Be able to analyze resulting data; and***
- 3. Be able to draw appropriate conclusions from such data.***

IV. Foundations of Society and Human Behavior (6 credit hours; two courses from two different departments)

The social sciences examine the forms of social activity. They study the social behavior of individuals and organizations, the structure of organizations and institutions, and the organization of society. Social science deals with such things as the formation of attitudes; how institutions develop, function, and change; how technology transforms society and social institutions; how societies change the environment and respond to environmental change; the relationships between individuals and society; and matters of race, gender, and class.

Courses that meet this requirement teach students to understand the complexities of human and societal behavior, to predict future behavior, and to understand the consequences of behavior.

Students who satisfy the Society and Human Behavior requirement will:

- 1. Be able to identify patterns of human behavior;***
- 2. Demonstrate an understanding of how political, social, cultural, or economic institutions influence human behavior;***
- 3. Understand key social science methods and the theoretical foundations behind these methods;***
- 4. Be able to apply social science methods to the analysis of social, cultural, psychological, ethical, political, technological, or economic issues or problems.***

V. Foundations in Global Citizenship (6 credit hours; two courses from two different departments)

FAU students live in an increasingly diverse region. They also live in a world in which individuals, societies, and governments are becoming more and more interconnected. To succeed in this interconnected world, students must have an understanding of diverse cultures and inherited traditions; they must be able to communicate across these diverse cultures; they must understand why societies make the choices that they make; and they must have an awareness of how their actions affect others.

Courses that meet this requirement examine aspects of the diverse human experience (inclusive of issues of race, ethnicity, and gender), leading to a better understanding of ourselves and of people from other cultural traditions. Students will select courses from the following areas, one of which must be from the global perspectives category:

1. Western identities
2. Global perspectives

Students completing the Global Citizenship requirement will demonstrate an understanding of:

- 1. Different individual, cultural, and national identities;***
- 2. The economic, political, environmental, and/or social processes that influence human action/interaction.***

VI. Foundations of Creative Expression (6 credit hours; two courses from two different departments)

Creative expression is a uniquely human attribute. Through literature, the creative and performing arts, and architecture, individuals and cultures express their values and ideals, as well as explore human potential, the human condition, and the imagination.

Students fulfilling the Creative Expression requirement will demonstrate an understanding of:

- 1. One or more forms/genres of creative expression;***
- 2. The theory or methods behind the creative expression;***
- 3. The social, cultural, or historical context of the creative expression(s).***