



The Clemson University Undergraduate
General Education Curriculum

From: General Education Committee

To: AAH College Curriculum Chair, Honors College Curriculum Chair

Date: January 23, 2023

Request for Discussion on Designations in Arts & Humanities area of the General Education Curriculum

Introduction

To meet the General Education requirement in Arts & Humanities as it is currently structured, students must complete two 3-credit courses: one selected from a list of “Literature” courses, the other from a list of “Non-Literature” courses. It has come to the General Education Committee’s attention that while students, academic staff, and faculty are typically familiar with this configuration, there is little understanding of its purpose. Many students do not understand the designations. Many advisors and faculty are looking to the lists for guidance on what students should take without an institutional understanding of the intended purpose of the two subsets.

Although this lack of institutional understanding might be indicative of an outdated format that has outgrown its usefulness, the Committee has encountered reasons for not rushing to this conclusion. (See [Appendix](#) for relevant background.) To wit: a National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE) deployed in 2021 indicates that Clemson students spend less time on assigned reading than their counterparts in peer universities. Do we want a situation where students could fulfil their Arts & Humanities requirements without any courses that entailed rigorous reading and writing? Unlikely.

Consequently, the General Education Committee is issuing a request for the faculty (via departmental and curriculum committees) **to consider possible changes to the Arts & Humanities area of the Crossings curriculum—in particular, to the classification of Arts & Humanities courses as either Literature or Non-Literature.**

The objective of the General Education Committee in this ask is to focus faculty discussions on the Arts & Humanities area of the Crossings curriculum *in support of advancing student learning*, rather than departmental turf. An eventual outcome may include suggested curriculum changes or there may be no changes pursued. If we do pursue curriculum changes, they would not go into effect until the 2024 undergraduate catalog at the earliest. Additionally, we are also amenable to revisions to the student learning outcomes and/or assessment rubrics. As articulated over the last few years, a general education curriculum is [more than a list of courses](#).

The Request

What we’re asking is if department, college, and Honors curriculum committees with courses in the Arts & Humanities Crossings area could have a discussion guided by the questions and information below. Share your responses with the General Education Committee by early April 2023. You might also want to invite the chair or members of the General Education Committee to a meeting. (See list on [Shared Governance website](#).)

For Consideration: Items Raised to the General Education Committee’s Thus Far

OPTION 1: DROP THE SUBSETS

- If a strong rationale for maintaining the two subsets is not determined, the Committee recommends making the Arts & Humanities student learning area more like the Social

Sciences area, where courses must be from two different course codes. A potential catalog change might read:

Potential change	Current catalog language
Arts and Humanities (minimum of 6 credit hours). Arts and Humanities credit hours must be selected from two different fields. [Course list goes here]	Arts and Humanities (minimum of 6 credit hours) Literature (3 credit hours) [Course list is here] Non-Literature (3 credit hours) [Course list is here]

OPTION 2: MAINTAIN THE SUBSETS

- If a strong rationale for maintaining the two subsets is determined, the General Education Committee will then work on:
 - Developing a short statement that conveys this purpose.
 - Re-labeling the subsets to “Literature-Centered” and “Other” or develop some other kind of label.
 - Defining the qualifications for courses designated as “Literature-Centered.”

QUESTIONS TO GUIDE THE DISCUSSION

Pedagogical

- Is the goal of the literature designation to have students engaging closely in the act of reading, regardless of type of text? Could a course where students read Old Testament or Quran or Aristotle fit this category?
- What is the role of reading (and writing) in the general education curriculum, both in what we aspire them to be and what they are in actuality? Do we want to maintain the concept of separating the Literature-centric courses?
 - What is meant by literature? Courses that engage true literature only - in English, in translation, or in another language?

Structural

- A general education curriculum needs breadth of knowledge, as required in the SACSCOC standard for general education.
- What are the advantages or disadvantages of asking students to take any 2 courses from the Arts & Humanities list?
 - As long as they are from different course codes? (Advantages: Might help with breadth. This is what we currently do with Social Sciences.) What are the implications? For instance, are SPAN and LANG different enough? Would students need to complete 3 hours in one code and 3 in another? Or could there be a mix? For instance, there could be a student who enrolls in Jazz Band for 5 semesters (1 credit each) and Theatre Practicum for 1 credit. Is that okay?
 - Or keep it open, where students could complete 6 hours in any area? (To consider: Using the Social Sciences list again as an example, many courses there are often foundational to the discipline, whereas courses in the Arts & Humanities area cover may different topics and perspectives.)
- If we wish to keep some structural separation via subcategories within the full list, would we want a “read, interpret, write” set of courses and an “interpret” set of courses?

Other - What is the impact on enrollment? Although there are many courses in the non-literature list, there are typically not many sections taught, so students have trouble finding a course to take.

Appendix: Background

As far back as the 2001 Undergraduate Announcements, the area was known only as “Humanities” and directed students to complete three hours in sophomore literature or foreign language literature and three hours from an additional list of courses. (See **Figure 1.**) The reasons for these two sub-lists within the Arts and Humanities student learning outcome area predate current institutional memory, which is a primary reason for requesting a discussion.

The General Education Committee reviewed assessment results from past years. They found the following result noteworthy from the National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE) deployed in 2021. When asked “Of the time you spend preparing for class in a typical 7-day week, about how much is on assigned reading?” The scale ranges from 1 (very little) to 5 (almost all). Both first year and senior Clemson respondents reported a 2.3. This result is statistically below the results from our peer institutions. The General Education Committee is concerned that we do not want a situation where students could take all of their Arts & Humanities courses where rigorous reading and writing is avoided.

The General Education Committee also asked if other peer institutions have “Literature” and “Non-Literature” designations. The answer is no. There are different areas that Arts and Humanities courses might go into depending on how their general education curriculum is arranged, but they do not use these designations.

By design and with faculty input and shared governance, we currently have two learning outcomes for the Arts and Humanities student learning outcome area and faculty choose which learning outcome is best aligned to their course content and course-level learning outcomes. (See **Table 1.**) Our Crossings annual assessment shows that approximately 80% of faculty use the learning outcome focused more on analysis (SLO1) and the other 20% the learning outcome focused more on creation/interpretation/etc. (SLO2). That flexibility is important for faculty pedagogical autonomy. The General Education Committee has chartered an Assessment Subcommittee to meet in Spring 2023 to review our assessment plan and measures.

Figure 1. Excerpt from 2001 Undergraduate Announcements

- E. Humanities6 hours**
- 1. Three hours selected from sophomore literature courses (200 level only) or foreign language literature (300 level or higher)
ENGL 202, 203, 204, 205, 206, 207, 208, 209, H210
FR 300, 400, 406, 407, 408, 499
GER 301, 302, 401, 402, 403
ITAL 301, 302, 400
JAPN 406
SPAN 301, 303, 311, 401, 403, 404, 405, 406, 422, 499
- 2. Three hours selected from the following:
A A H 101, 210
C H S H203
ENGL 202, 203, 204, 205, 206, 207, 208, 209, H210, 350, 351, 353, 355, 356, 357, 380, 385, 386
FR 201, 202
GER 201, 202
G W 301
HUM 301, 302, 306, 309
ITAL 201, 202
JAPN 201, 202
MUSIC 210, 311, 312, 313, 314
PHIL 101, 102, 103, 303, 304, 315, 316, 317, 318, 320, 323, 324, 325, 326, 327, 330, 343, 344, 345
REL 101, 102, 301, 306, 307
RUSS 201, 202
SPAN 201, 202, 221
SPCH 365, 369
THEA 210, 315, 316, 317
W S 301

<p>Table 1. Student Learning Outcomes (required as per SACSCOS standards)</p> <p><i>Arts & Humanities student learning outcome 1:</i> Students will analyze, interpret, and employ aesthetic, ethical, linguistic, and/or philosophical discourse in relevant contexts.</p> <p><u>or</u></p> <p><i>Arts & Humanities student learning outcome 2:</i> Students will create, perform, interpret, reinterpret, and/or criticize artistic works.</p>
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