GE Diversity Course Approval Description

I. Bylaw

The U.C. Davis Requirements for Higher Degrees, Section 522, sets forth the Baccalaureate Degree Requirements in General Education. Subsection (I) pertains to the Diversity requirement, stating:

A course in the social-cultural diversity component is any course that deals with issues such as race, ethnicity, social class, gender, sexuality, or religion (Academic Senate Regulation 522).

II. Interpretation

The U.C. Davis catalog states that “Courses in social-cultural diversity teach students the significance of the many patterned differences that characterize human populations – particularly differences of gender, race, ethnicity, sexuality, religion or social class.”

The purpose of the diversity requirement is for students to gain a greater appreciation of the myriad of perspectives found in a multi-cultural society. Ideally, students should seek courses offering perspectives other than those with which they are most familiar, although clearly there may be a variety of within-group perspectives worth exploring. Historically, the curriculum committee has approved two types of classes: those containing "under-represented perspectives" and those with "perspectives grounded in social-cultural diversity." Education Abroad Program courses may be used to satisfy the GE diversity requirements, if and only if they meet the other requirements for a GE diversity course.

Under-Represented Perspectives. These are the "traditional" diversity courses such as those in ethnic and women's studies. They typically present information less likely to be covered in "mainstream" classes, such as the perspective of different immigrant and ethnic groups. These classes provide concentrated information about new cultures, new perspectives, and/or the forces that shape one’s histories and viewpoints. The goal is to enable students to think critically and analytically about multiple aspects of diversity. As the curriculum committee noted, the long-term goal is to eventually include these types of materials in "mainstream" classes so that these will no longer be under-represented perspectives.

Perspectives Grounded in Social-Cultural Diversity. A broader approach is to include diversity perspectives within traditional subject areas. This approach provides (a) a more integrated curriculum and (b) allows for a comparison of multiple perspectives in order to more broadly understand the culture in which we live. For example, GE courses on social aspects of aging should include attention to social class, ethnicity, and gender as potent determinants of the aging experience; those in modern literature could (and often do) include writers from diverse backgrounds. We would encourage the inclusion of these types of materials in all relevant courses.
III. Guiding questions

1. Does this course cover:
   (a) under-represented perspectives?
   (b) perspectives grounded in social-cultural diversity?
2. Which under-represented groups or perspectives will be addressed in this class?
3. How does the class provide an opportunity to think critically and analytically about issues in diversity?
4. How will you assess whether these goals have been achieved in the students’ academic performance (i.e., sample test questions, paper topics, etc.)?

IV. Sample GE Justifications:
(These courses were approved before the new guidelines and may not address all of the guiding questions.)

1) Diversity is defined as the dynamic of difference in regard to social power, perception, and judgment. Considerations of personal, social, and cultural differences are essential for science and society inquiry. The course emphasizes complex links among culture (race, gender, geography, socio-economic status, and so forth) and the issues under study. Of concern are the multiple ways that people experience and are affected by issues, as well as the multiple ways that disciplines understand those issues.

2) This course focuses on the effects of race, ethnicity, gender, sexuality and religion on German society from the Middle Ages to the present. The difference between American and German concepts of race is highlighted.

3) This course studies literature across cultures, making cultural difference central to the course. It focuses centrally on analyzing the role of literature in the construction of gender, race, class, and sexuality.