GE Topical Breadth – 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 (H) pertains to the Topical Breadth requirement, stating:

A course in the topical breadth component is characterized by the following features:

1. It addresses broad subject matter areas that are important to a student's general knowledge.
2. It takes a critical, analytical perspective on knowledge, considering how knowledge has been acquired, and the assumptions, theories, or paradigms that guide its interpretation.
3. It requires readings from a range of sources.
4. The Committee on Courses of Instruction may certify for General Education credit a course that does not embody all these features if, in its judgment, the course has other qualities that make its inclusion in the program desirable.

II. Interpretation

Topical breadth courses are grouped into three broad subject areas of knowledge:

1. **Arts and Humanities.** Courses in this area provide students with knowledge of significant intellectual traditions, cultural achievements and historical processes.
2. **Science and Engineering.** Courses in this area provide students with knowledge of major scientific ideas and applications. They seek to communicate the scope, power, limitations and appeal of science.
3. **Social Sciences.** Courses in this area provide students with knowledge of the individual, social, political and economic activities of people.

An upper division course with a relatively specialized focus also may receive a GE certification when it deals with principles or paradigms that have broad implications. Some courses with a heavy “applied” emphasis may not be given GE certification. If a given course bridges two or more of these general areas, the department or program should recommend which of the above three subject matter areas seems most appropriate. When a sufficient claim can be made that a course should be certified in more than one topical breadth area, this will be allowed. Education Abroad Program courses may be used to satisfy breadth requirements, if and only if they meet the other requirements for a GE breadth course.
III. Guiding questions

1. How does the course reflect topical breadth?
   a. Does it integrate perspectives from multiple fields?
   b. Does it look at the same subject matter using different methodologies?
   c. Does it use a particular method, theory, or formal model to examine a diverse range of subject matter?
2. How does the course contribute to a student’s general knowledge?
3. How does the course reflect a critical analytical approach to knowledge?
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. This course is designated for GE as Social Science topical breadth. It provides an overview of the foundations of micro economics, covering the theory and paradigm of economics as well as its practice. The applications cover a broad range of critical issues in micro economics including the role of government in markets, taxes and economic activity, minimum wages and the labor market, and inequality. The development of analytical models is central to the approach, and the course readings reveal how a wide array of perspectives can be understood and assessed within the economic paradigm.

2. This course meets the topical breadth requirements in Arts and Humanities because the selected texts are encyclopedic in their intellectual implications. (For example, Dante’s *Comedy* incorporates politics, history, literature, art history, science, philosophy, and obviously religion.) The same could be said for Cervantes’ *Don Quixote*.

3. This course focuses on the controversies which accompany important contemporary issues in the agricultural and environmental sciences, such as genetic engineering, global warming, and food and fiber production and consumption. To understand these issues, students must learn the associated science and explore the underlying inquiry processes, as well as the nature of the controversies. The required science includes: purposes, processes and outcomes of genetic manipulation of plants and animals; current assessments of the state of the global environment; issues related to nutrition, food availability and food safety; implications of population demographics and trends for food supply and environmental health; and so forth.