Cluster Four: Social and Cultural Processes

Dr. William Boyer, Coordinator

Rapid changes are taking place in today's world that are transforming our lives. In order to make informed judgments about the causes of these changes, their underlying dynamics and the implications they hold for the future, students must become critical thinkers about their own societies and the larger global community. Students must learn how to frame questions, develop strategies of inquiry, build upon past scholarship and make connections between distinct disciplines of study. Cluster Four courses help students develop these capabilities through an examination of the key social and cultural processes and structures that shape the human experience. Students will take one course that focuses on the American experience and one course that examines the global experience.

The Cluster Four courses that students must take are not sequenced so that either part of the cluster may be taken first or they may be taken concurrently. Students may not take two courses from the same discipline in completing the Cluster Four requirement.

Cluster Four Package

The American Experience

Each of the American Experience courses provides students with an understanding of the major themes and concepts that structure American life today. GHIST 225 does so through a contextual and document-based study of the American historical experience. Emphasis is placed on understanding the interaction of people, ideas and social movements.

GPOSC 225 focuses more narrowly on the evolution and operation of the American political system in presenting major themes and concepts. It does so by examining the fundamental principles on which American political institutions are based and using social science research methodology to examine competing claims about the current functioning of the American political system.

Choose one of the following

- GHIST 225. U.S. History
- GPOSC 225. U.S. Government

The Global Experience

Each of the courses in the Global Experience is an investigation into a series of global issues that are of great importance to the human community. Topics discussed will vary from course to course. These global issues are examined in a systemic context that allows students to see connections between disciplines and the multidisciplinary nature of the issues they are studying.

Choose one of the following

- GANTH 195. Cultural Anthropology
- GECON 200. Macroeconomics
- GGEOG 200. Geography: The Global Dimension
- GPOSC 200. Global Politics

Cluster Four Learning Objectives

American Experience

Students completing this part of Cluster Four will be able to identify, conceptualize and evaluate

- Social and political processes and structures using quantitative and qualitative data
- Key primary sources relating to American history, political institutions and society
- The nature and development of the intellectual concepts that structure American political activity
- The history and operation of American democratic institutions
- The history and development of American society
- The history and development of American involvement in world affairs

Global Experience

Students completing this part of Cluster Four will be able to identify, conceptualize and evaluate

- Basic global problems
- Global political, social, cultural and economic systems
- The issues involved in analyzing societies different from one's own
- The global forces that shape societies
Theoretical models used in studying global problems
The strengths and limitations of alternative solutions to global problems across and within cultures