General Education:  
*The Human Community*

*Dr. Margaret M. Mulrooney, Associate Vice Provost for University Programs*

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**Mission Statement**
In the liberal arts tradition, General Education: The Human Community aspires to create informed global citizens of the 21st century. We challenge our community of students and faculty to engage in personal and collective reflection, development, and action.

**Philosophy**
General Education: The Human Community is the core academic program of James Madison University in which students come to understand how distinct disciplines look at the world from different vantage points. Courses in The Human Community are organized into five clusters, each emphasizing unique tools, rationales, and methodologies. Taken together, courses in a student's chosen major and The Human Community complement and complete each other. Both are integral and essential components of a student's full and proper education.

**Goals**
Students understand the historical and contemporary distinctions and interconnections among people, institutions, and communities that create, preserve, and transmit culture and knowledge in the arts, sciences, mathematics, social sciences, and humanities.
Students become skilled in questioning, investigating, analyzing, evaluating, and communicating.
Students participate in a variety of aesthetic and civic experiences reflecting human concerns and values that transcend the limits of specialization.

**Structure**
The Human Community credit hour requirements are:

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Cluster One: Skills for the 21st Century
Gretchen Anne Hazard, Coordinator

Cluster One is the cornerstone of General Education: The Human Community at JMU. Through course work in three areas and a required information literacy test, this cluster requires students to demonstrate:
- Critical thinking skills
- Effective oral presentation skills
- Effective writing skills
- Competency in information literacy

Competence in these areas is fundamental to subsequent study in major and professional programs. Therefore, all students are required to complete Cluster One requirements during their first academic year at JMU.

Cluster One Structure
Cluster One consists of nine credits and a competency test. All students must earn credit for one course in each of three areas representing the primary content of the cluster: Critical Thinking, Human Communication and Writing. In addition to the three courses, students are required to demonstrate competency in information literacy by passing the Madison Research Essentials Test (MREST).

Enrollment in Cluster One courses is required of students in their first academic year at JMU. Cluster One areas and courses are not repeatable without permission. To secure permission to take a second Cluster One course, students must submit a “Cluster One Request Form” available on the General Education website under “Forms.” Requests will be accepted for permission to enroll in an open section of an appropriate class one week prior to the beginning of each semester and through the end of the open enrollment period. Permission to enroll is given based on course availability; there are no overrides available in Cluster One courses.

Cluster One Requirements
Cluster One skills in writing, human communication, information literacy and critical thinking are essential to academic success and, for that reason, should be taken during a student’s first year at JMU. While Cluster One courses must be completed in the first year, the courses may be taken in any order.

Critical Thinking
In this area, students study various techniques and approaches to critical thinking such as analyzing and evaluating information, arguments, premises and concepts. Critical thinking fosters inquiry and problem solving abilities. Depending upon the course, the content focuses on the function of language, basic business principles, issues in recent history, mediated communication, informal logical reasoning or problem solving in science and technology. Cluster One offers six classes that meet this requirement.

Choose one of the following:
- BUS 160. Business Decision Making in a Modern Society
- HIST 150. Critical Issues in Recent Global History
- ISAT 160. Problem Solving Approaches in Science and Technology
- MAD 150. Mediated Communication: Issues and Skills
- PHIL 120. Critical Thinking
- PHIL 150. Ethical Reasoning

Students pursuing a Bachelor of Arts (B.A.) degree may not use either PHIL 120 or PHIL 150 to fulfill the B.A. philosophy course requirement.

Students who have received credit for one critical thinking class are not eligible to receive credit for a second critical thinking class without permission.

Human Communication
In this area, students are introduced to the study of human communication as a process. Emphasis is on examining the role of self-concept, perception, culture, verbal and nonverbal dimensions in the communication process; using power and managing conflict and applying critical listening skills. Depending upon the course, the content focuses on an overview of the principles and practices of interpersonal, small group and public communication, or constructing informative and persuasive speeches with an emphasis on individual public speaking contexts, or constructing informative and persuasive group presentations. Cluster One requires completion of one of three courses offered in human communication.

Choose one of the following:
- COM 121. Fundamental Human Communication: Presentations
- COM 122. Fundamental Human Communication: Individual Presentations
- COM 123. Fundamental Human Communication: Group Presentations

Students who have received credit for one COM class are not eligible to receive credit for a second COM class.

Writing
This area of Cluster One emphasizes the process of constructing focused, logical, coherent and well-supported documents. Students employ research to produce writing stylistically appropriate to its audience, purpose and occasion. Students are introduced to a variety of writing genres. Students are required to edit their writing for clarity and control of conventions.

Complete the following:
- WRTC 103. Critical Reading and Writing
GWRTC Credit and Waiver

Students may receive credit or waiver for GWRTC 103 under the following conditions:

- an AP minimum score of 4 on the English Language and Composition or the English Literature and Composition test.
- a Higher-Level IB English score of 5.
- transfer or dual enrollment credit for GWRTC 103.
- successful completion of the GWRTC 103 Waiver by Examination.

Students who have received credit for GWRT 101 are not eligible to receive credit for WRTC 100. Students who have received credit for GWRT 102 are not eligible to receive credit for WRTC 100 or GWRTC 103. Students may not repeat GWRTC 103 for credit.

Information Literacy

Information literacy is the ability to locate, evaluate, and use information effectively to accomplish a purpose. Cluster One requires completion of the Madison Research Essentials Test (MREST). All entering students must pass the MREST by the deadline announced by the university.

Cluster One Learning Objectives

After completing Cluster One: Skills for the 21st Century, students should be able to use reading, writing, human communication, critical thinking, and information literacy skills for inquiring, learning, thinking, and communicating in their personal, academic, and civic lives.

Critical Thinking

After completing course work in critical thinking, students should be able to:

- Evaluate claims in terms of clarity, credibility, reliability, and accuracy.
- Demonstrate the ability to identify, analyze, and generate claims, arguments, and positions.
- Identify and evaluate theses and conclusions, stated and unstated assumptions, and supporting evidence and arguments.
- Apply these skills to one’s own work and the work of others.

Human Communication

After completing course work in communication, students should be able to:

- Explain the fundamental processes that significantly influence communication.
- Construct messages consistent with the diversity of communication purpose, audience, context, and ethics.
- Respond to messages consistent with the diversity of communication purpose, audience, context, and ethics.
- Utilize information skills expected of ethical communicators.

Writing

After completing course work in writing, students should be able to:

- Demonstrate an awareness of rhetorical knowledge, which may include the ability to analyze and act on understandings of audiences, purposes, and contexts in creating and comprehending texts.
- Employ critical thinking, which includes the ability, through reading, research, and writing, to analyze a situation or text and make thoughtful decisions based on that analysis.
- Employ writing processes.
- Demonstrate an awareness of conventions, the formal and informal guidelines that define what is considered to be correct and appropriate in a variety of texts.
- Compose in multiple environments using traditional and digital communication tools.

Information Literacy

After completing the MREST, JMU’s information literacy test, and course work in critical thinking, human communication and writing, students should be able to:

- Recognize that information is available in a variety of forms including, but not limited to, text, images, and visual media.
- Determine when information is needed and find it efficiently using a variety of reference sources.
- Evaluate the quality of the information.
- Use information effectively for a purpose.
- Employ appropriate technologies to create an information-based product.
- Use information ethically and legally.
Cluster Two: Arts and Humanities

Dr. Dennis Beck, Interim Coordinator

Cluster Two shows students what it means to live lives enriched by reflection, imagination and creativity. It does so by offering each individual a multidisciplinary experience within the arts and humanities, those areas of endeavor that humans have long valued for their intrinsic worth and that invite a deeper appreciation of the human experience. The broadly stated goals for Cluster Two are:

- To introduce students to cultural, historical, aesthetic and theoretical expressions of and questions about human experience.
- To expose students to multiple academic disciplines in the arts and humanities and their methods and unique perspectives.
- To inspire a deeper awareness of how the interplay between culture and expression affects both collective and individual identities.
- To foster appreciation of the aesthetic and formal qualities of literary, visual and performing arts.
- To engage students in thinking critically and communicating clearly about enduring questions concerning human life, culture and history.

Cluster Two Structure

Students complete nine credits by choosing one course from each of three groups: Human Questions and Contexts; Visual and Performing Arts; and Literature.

Group One: Human Questions and Contexts

Students will take one course from the list below. GAMST 200 takes an interdisciplinary approach to questions about American identity and shows how they reflect a complex interplay of cultural, historical, religious and ideological perspectives. The GANTH and GHIST courses introduce students to the great cultures of the world by surveying the common patterns of experience that characterized Western, Middle Eastern, Asian, African, Meso- and South American societies in the past. The GHUM courses are interdisciplinary, in-depth explorations of specific topics, cultures, periods or themes. The GPHIL and GREL courses explore the great inquires into human existence and the ways different cultures across different time periods constructed their responses to questions concerning humans’ existence and their relationship to nature, ultimate reality and the universe. Thus all of the courses in Group One emphasize central questions about the human condition and ways of studying values and beliefs as they are shaped by class, gender, race, historical events, philosophy and religion.

Choose one of the following:

- GAMST 200. Introduction to American Studies
- GANTH 205. Buried Cities, Lost Tribes: The Rise and Fall of Early Human Societies
- GHIST 101. World History to 1500
- GHIST 102. World History Since 1500
- GHUM 102. God, Meaning, and Morality
- GHUM 250. Foundations of Western Culture
  (Topics vary by section. Examples include: Ancient Greece, Rome)
- GPHIL 101. Introduction to Philosophy
- GREL 101. Religions of the World
- GPHIL 251. Modern Perspectives
  (Topics vary by section. Examples include: The Enlightenment, Romanticism, and Human Rights)
- GPHIL 252. Cross-Cultural Perspectives
  (Topics vary by section. Examples include: East Asia, West Africa, Latin American Cultures, Islamic Civilization)
- GMUS 101. Introduction to Music
- GMUS 200. Music in General Culture
- GMUS 203. Music in America
- GMUS 206. Introduction to Global Music
- GTHEA 210. Introduction to Theatre

Group Two: Visual and Performing Arts

Students will take one course from the list below. GARTH 205 and GARTH 206 are global art history surveys that introduce students to the visual arts, whose history often has been interconnected with developments in music, dance and theatre/film. These surveys are organized chronologically, but focus distinctly on artistic perception and experience. The global music surveys explore history and the arts through the study of music: its development, aesthetics, forms and styles, and its context within the cultural communities that produced it. GARTH 200 and GMUS 200 are introductions to art or music in general culture; GTHEA 210 studies theatre as an art form including acting, directing, design, costuming, lighting; GMUS 203 explores America’s music landscape and examines the interconnections among music, art and literature in historical periods.

Choose one of the following:

- GARTH 200. Art in General Culture
- GARTH 205. Survey of World Art I: Prehistoric to Renaissance
- GARTH 206. Survey of World Art II: Renaissance to Modern
- GMUS 200. Music in General Culture
- GMUS 203. Music in America
- GMUS 206. Introduction to Global Music
- GTHEA 210. Introduction to Theatre

Group Three: Literature

Students will choose a course from the list below. The literature surveys provide students with extensive reading experiences of representative genres and authors and various critical approaches to literary texts, as well as opportunities to explore the complex ways that the literature both reflects and helps change or create the cultural and intellectual contexts of the times in which they are written. Students are expected to learn strategies for reading and interpreting any literary text so that they come to deepen their appreciation of the aesthetics, rhetorical strategies and meaning of a range of literary texts. Through the humanistic study of literature, students will also gain a better understanding of themselves and their own culture as well as those of others.

Choose one of the following:

- GEN 221. Literature/Culture/Ideas
- GEN 222. Genre(s)
- GEN 235. Survey of English Literature: From Beowulf to the 18th Century
- GEN 236. Survey of English Literature: 18th Century to Modern
- GEN 239. Studies in World Literature
- GEN 247. Survey of American Literature: From the Beginning to the Civil War

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Cluster Two Learning Objectives

After completing Group One, Human Questions and Contexts, students will be able to:
- Use critical and comparative analysis to question their own and others’ beliefs about and responses to the world or universe.
- Apply the methods of the discipline(s) studied to material from the humanities.
- Identify, evaluate and produce arguments using appropriate concepts and techniques and formulate logical arguments on the same basis.
- Demonstrate an understanding of broader cultural, historical or conceptual contexts of particular issues, ideas, objects or events — past and present.
- Experience humanities events (such as exhibits, films, performances or public lectures) more discerningly.

After completing Group Two, Visual and Performing Arts, students will be able to:
- Explain how artistic works and culture are interrelated.
- Recognize that the arts are accessible and relevant to their lives.
- Demonstrate disciplinary literacy (vocabulary, concepts, creative processes) in a major art form.
- Produce an informed response to the form, content and aesthetic qualities of artistic works.
- Experience arts events more discerningly.
- Acknowledge relationships among the arts.

After completing Group Three, Literature, students will be able to:
- Generate increasingly nuanced questions (interpretations, ideas) about literature and explain why those questions matter.
- Use appropriate vocabulary and tactics to analyze specific literary expressions of culture and the relationship between the reader, the author and text.
- Define ways that texts serve as arguments and identify rhetorical and formal elements that inform these arguments.
- Recognize appropriate contexts (such as genres, political perspectives, textual juxtapositions) and understand that readers may interpret literature from a variety of perspectives.
- Articulate a variety of examples of the ways in which literature gives us access to the human experience that reveals what differentiates it from, and connects it to, the other disciplines that make up the arc of human learning.

The courses in Group Three are designated as writing-infused. Students will write a minimum of 5,000 words (approximately 15 pages double-spaced in a standard font) in assignments that may include both informal and formal, ungraded and graded forms. The extensive opportunity to produce and receive feedback on various genres of academic writing will help students sharpen their responses to interesting and thought-provoking texts and promote more engaged and sophisticated reading strategies.
Cluster Three: The Natural World

Dr. Scott Paulson, Coordinator

Scientific investigations into the natural world use analytical methods to evaluate evidence, build and test models based on that evidence, and develop theories. Mathematical studies of form and pattern can create a language that assists in these investigations. Courses in this cluster provide students with the opportunity to develop problem-solving skills in science and mathematics at the college level. Students will be introduced to a substantial body of scientific facts, concepts, models and theories, and they will also gain experience in using basic mathematics to obtain knowledge about the natural world. Each track is multidisciplinary and interdisciplinary, thereby demonstrating boundaries and connections among mathematics, the sciences and other aspects of culture.

Cluster Three: Track I and Track II

All students begin either Track I or Track II in Cluster Three during their first year and should complete it by the end of their sophomore year. Individual courses in the tracks satisfy requirements in a number of major and professional programs on campus. Students are encouraged to select appropriate courses in Cluster Three on the basis of their backgrounds, interests and educational objectives.

Track I

In this track, students take one course from each of three groups and are required to have at least one lab experience. Group 1 consists of mathematics courses, and Groups 2 and 3 consist of science courses. The groups may be taken in any order, except for courses denoted by an asterisk (*), which have a mathematics and/or science prerequisite or corequisite.

Group 1. Choose one of the following:
- MATH 105. Introductory Calculus I
- MATH 103. The Nature of Mathematics
- MATH 104. Quantitative Literacy and Reasoning

Group 2. Choose one of the following:
- CHEM 120. Concepts of Chemistry
- MATH 205. Introductory Calculus I
- MATH 220. Elementary Statistics
- MATH 231. Calculus with Functions I
- MATH 235. Calculus I

Group 3 course with a lab

Cluster Three Learning Objectives

After completing Cluster Three: The Natural World, students should be able to meet the following objectives grouped under three learning goals:

- Describe the methods of inquiry that lead to mathematical truth and scientific knowledge and be able to distinguish science from pseudoscience.
- Use theories and models as unifying principles that help us understand natural phenomena and make predictions.
- Recognize the interdependence of applied research, basic research, and technology, and how they affect society.
- Illustrate the interdependence between developments in science and social and ethical issues.
- Use graphical, symbolic and numerical methods to analyze, organize and interpret natural phenomena.
- Discriminate between association and causation, and identify the types of evidence used to establish causation.
- Formulate hypotheses, identify relevant variables, and design experiments to test hypotheses.
- Evaluate the credibility, use, and misuse of scientific and mathematical information in scientific developments and public-policy issues.

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Cluster Four:
Social and Cultural Processes

Dr. Raymond M. Hyser, Coordinator

Courses in Cluster Four require students to think critically about their own society and its relationship to the larger global community. These courses develop responsible and enlightened global citizenship by examining a wide variety of the processes that shape the human experience. Students will take one course that focuses on the American experience and one course that examines the global experience.

Cluster Four Structure
Cluster Four courses are not sequenced so that either part of the cluster may be taken first or they may be taken concurrently. Students may not take GPOSC 200 and GPOSC 225 to complete the Cluster Four requirement.

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 that emphasizes the interaction of people, ideas and social movements. GJUST 225 frames questions regarding historic and contemporary events in terms of issues of justice, highlighting how societal structures interact with individual lives and vice versa. GPOSC 225 focuses on the evolution and contemporary operation of the American political system by examining its fundamental principles and current dynamics.

Choose one of the following:
GHIST 225. U.S. History
GJUST 225. Justice and American Society
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. Issues are examined in a systemic context that allows students to see connections between disciplines. The unifying theme is an analysis of overarching structures at the global level that condition people’s behavior and which are shaped by that behavior. From this perspective the study of global issues requires more than studying current events; it involves placing these global issues in a systemic context.

Choose one of the following:
GAFST 200. Introduction to Africana Studies
GANTH 195. Cultural Anthropology
GECON 200. Introduction to Macroeconomics
GEOG 200. Geography: The Global Dimension
GPOSC 200. Global Politics
GSOCI 110. Social Issues in a Global Context

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 and culture
- 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 that shape societies
- The issues involved in analyzing societies different from one’s own
- Theoretical models used in studying global problems
- The strengths and limitations of solutions to global problems across and within cultures
Cluster Five: Individuals in the Human Community

Dr. Georgia N. L. J. Polacek, Coordinator

Through studying the many variables that influence human behavior in contemporary society, students gain an understanding of the relationship between the individual and a diverse community and develop a sense of responsibility for self and community. Students explore how individuals develop and function in the social, psychological, emotional, physical and spiritual dimensions.

Cluster Five Structure
In Cluster Five, students learn about themselves as individuals and as members of different communities. The courses within this six credit-hour cluster may be taken concurrently or individually, in any order.

Students are required to complete one course each in the Wellness and Sociocultural Domains.

Students are expected to complete Cluster Five course work during their first two years at the university.

Wellness Domain
Courses in this area examine the dimensions of health and wellness. An emphasis is placed on the factors that influence health and wellness, particularly individual behaviors.

Students will participate in self-assessments that provide information about their health and wellness behaviors and their overall health status. In addition, students will learn strategies that improve lifetime health and wellness. Courses include a physical wellness component as a part of the course requirements.

Choose one of the following:
- HTH 100. Personal Wellness
- KIN 100. Lifetime Fitness and Wellness

Sociocultural Domain
Courses in this area focus on sociocultural and psychological aspects of individuals interacting within societal contexts. Students study the formation and functions of social relationships and reflect on personal responsibilities to diverse communities within which people function throughout life. Students explore sociocultural and psychological aspects of personal belief systems, self-identity and assumptions about others.

Courses in this area enable students to develop ethical and scientifically-based critical thinking about human behavior and social interaction.

Choose one of the following:
- PSYC 101. General Psychology
- PSYC 160. Life Span Human Development
- SOC 140. Microsociology: The Individual in Society

Cluster Five Learning Objectives
After completing Cluster Five: Individuals in the Human Community, students will be able to do the following:

In the Wellness Domain
- Understand the dimensions of wellness, the various factors affecting each dimension and how dimensions are interrelated.
- Understand the relationship between personal behaviors and lifelong health and wellness.
- Assess their own levels of health and wellness and understand how these levels impact their quality of life.
- Identify and implement strategies to improve their wellness.

In the Sociocultural Domain
- Understand how individual and sociocultural factors interact in the development of the beliefs, behaviors and experiences of oneself and others.
- Discern the extent to which sources of information about the sociocultural domain are reputable and unbiased.
- Evaluate the extent to which the approach to and uses of psychosocial research are ethical and appropriate.