General Education Submission Form

Electronic submissions are preferred.

A. GE component for which course is being proposed:
   Thinking Globally and Communicating Cross-culturally

B. Submitted by Caryn Reeder

C. Ideally, submissions should be discussed by the entire department prior to submittal.
   [x] Chair has reviewed and approved the course.

D. Course being proposed (please attach syllabus):
   (Off Campus Program, Mayterm 2010)

E. This course
   [ ] Has not been modified, but is being submitted to check its suitability
   [x] Has had its syllabus rewritten to communicate the course’s contribution to GE
   [x] Has had its contents modified to address the relevant GE issues
   [ ] Is a new course designed to fulfill the GE requirement

F. This course is being submitted as
   [ ] A Template. Applicable to courses with multiple sections which require only general
      training in the discipline. The submission should come from the department chair and
      should clearly identify what course content and what elements of the syllabus the
      department has agreed will common to all sections. Upon approval by the GE
      Committee, any course whose syllabus is determined by the department to meet the
      specifications of the template is approved to satisfy this area requirement. A copy of
      each syllabus should be forwarded to the G.E. committee for record keeping purposes.
   [x] An Individual Course. Applicable to courses requiring specialized training in the
      discipline or are typically offered by a particular instructor. The course should be
      resubmitted and reassessed in the event of a change in staffing or syllabus.

G. Statement of rationale:
   (Please attach a copy of the syllabus which has been annotated (a) to identify the activities
   fulfilling each of the expectations for courses in this area and (b) to explain how the activity
   addresses the expectation. Electronic annotations are preferred.)

   This class is being proposed for a Mayterm 2010 Off Campus Program, ‘The Church in
   the Middle East,’ with Helen Rhee and myself. Traveling in the Middle East opens
   windows into the daily, lived practice of cross-cultural communication. We
   (professors and students) will experience this ourselves, of course, as Americans
   abroad, and we will spend time discussing and reflecting on what our experience of
   being ‘outsiders’ does for our understanding of ourselves, our own culture, and our
   reading of the Bible. But we will also be deliberately entering into formal and
informal conversations with local residents, and looking for and engaging with the sorts of cross-cultural communication that the peoples of the Middle East experience every day. How do Christians and Muslims work together, shop together, live side by side, and relate to each other? How do different Christian groups, in particular the traditional ancient churches (Coptic, Maronite, Catholic, Orthodox, etc.) and more recent Protestant missionary churches, get along? How do people speaking different languages – literally, or metaphorically – exist in community, and how do we fit into the mix?

To move beyond thinking in Western ways about the Eastern world, the class will require students to ask the local people we meet how they experience life in the twenty-first century. This process will involve careful observation of the places we go and loving interaction with the people we meet, in casual conversation, more formal or official meetings with church leaders, and home stays (in the syllabus, note the ‘Questions for the day’ sections). Students will ask what problems local peoples see in the world and their own society. What concerns to they have about the future? In what ways would these Middle Easterners challenge us to live out the gospel in a global world? In addition to these big questions of global thinking, we will also be specifically approaching the Bible with our new global lenses (note in particular the Bible readings throughout the course, the journal entries, and the major research project for the course). How do Christians, Muslims, agnostics, and others in the Middle East understand the Bible? How does the cultural and social life of the places we visit help us understand the New Testament in a different way? What elements of modern society in the Middle East look like or directly challenge society in the New Testament church?

The intersection of biblical interpretation, global thinking, and cross-cultural communication is reflected in the course components and schedule. Specific questions listed for the places we visit are designed to provoke interaction with and the search for sympathetic understanding of local people’s lives and thought. The biblical readings and the supporting secondary readings have been chosen to spark reflection on and challenge ‘Western’ assumptions about biblical texts, the life of the church (ancient and modern), and the way to be Christian in a global world. The major ongoing project for the course demands substantive, compassionate engagement with local cultures, churches, and peoples in order to understand the impact and significance of the Bible in the modern Middle East.