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# I. The Purpose of General Education at Westmont

## Academic Program

In keeping with our overall philosophy of education, our academic program is designed to foster intellectual vitality, Christian character, and commitment to service that will last a lifetime. Crucial to this goal is providing our students with an education that is both deep and broad. In the context of a major, students learn the discipline of submitting to a particular methodology and of mastering a specialized body of content. It is in their general education that they acquire the tools for relating this specialized knowledge to other realms of understanding, to their own lives, and to the world around them.

## Major Program

Each student, by the end of the sophomore year, will choose a major program. (The various major programs are outlined later in this catalogue.) The primary purpose of a major is to provide students with the experience of going beneath the surface of a field of learning. Though the particular skills of “going deep” may vary from discipline to discipline, the overall experience inculcates such broadly applicable virtues as patience, persistence, sustained attention, and awareness of complexity and ambiguity.

## General Education

In the tradition of the liberal arts, Westmont’s academic program requires students to set their major programs of study within the larger context of General Education. The General Education framework ensures that a student’s major program will be supported by the skills, the breadth of knowledge, the strategies of inquiry, and the practices that will enable them to mature in wisdom throughout their lives and to apply their learning effectively in the world around them.

As a liberal arts college in the Christian tradition, we ground our pursuit of learning and wisdom in the context of God’s revelation—manifested in the scriptures and in the world around us, and apprehended through reason, observation, experimentation and the affections. Through the General Education program, students develop the necessary contextual background, concepts, vocabulary, and skills to support their exploration of these various avenues to understanding the world.

In addition to developing knowledge and skills, our general education curriculum at Westmont seeks to inspire students to become constructive agents of redemption in a diverse and complex world. Thus, the General Education program provides opportunities for students to encounter a variety of viewpoints, cultures, and languages. Finally, we offer students the opportunity to practice their learning in the context of concrete experiences that facilitate the acquisition of wisdom, empathy and practical expertise.

## II. An Introduction to General Education at Westmont

Westmont students grow in ways that reflect the rich diversity of God's created order. But students are nourished by a common grounding that provides a shared context for growth in the Christian liberal arts tradition. As they grow in faith, students become rooted in the canon of the Old and New Testaments and in theological understanding. As they grow in skill, students cultivate their ability to write cogently, to reason mathematically, to converse in a language other than their native tongue, and to be fit stewards of their bodies. As they grow in knowledge, students increase their ability to grasp world history, to read and analyze discerningly from a Christian perspective, and to distinguish truths and values as they think through issues of eternal significance. Recognizing the breadth of their heritage, Westmont students explore a variety of the branches of human knowledge and inquiry. Such exploration necessarily involves choice. In choosing courses, students will encounter the modes of inquiry and ways of thinking of some disciplines and not others. But the array of options within the General Education program ensures that in reaching out to a wide variety of specific branches, each student will grasp something of the rich diversity of human learning as an organic whole. By becoming familiar with the vocabularies and types of questions asked in several disciplines, students equip themselves to be members of an increasingly global and diverse intellectual community.

Students encounter their heritage through courses labeled Common Contexts, Common Inquiries, and Common Skills. Each Common Contexts class grounds students in a body of material and explicitly invites them into an understanding of the Christian liberal arts. Each Common Inquiries class empowers students to explore the knowledge, methodologies, and modes of inquiry of a given discipline. Each Common Skills class encourages students to develop their verbal, quantitative, or physical dexterity. As they grow deeper in the common ground they share with other members of the community, Westmont students also master the methods and knowledge of their chosen majors. But a Christian liberal arts education is more than an intellectual exercise; students must incarnate their emerging maturity in competent and compassionate action. Living out what one has learned not only embodies the liberal arts tradition, which has always sought to produce informed and capable citizens, but also the Christian tradition, in which faith is demonstrated through works.

Reflecting the rich diversity of creation, such blossoming may take many different forms. It may emerge from and be demonstrated within the student's major field of study, or within academic work outside the major. Students demonstrate the capability not just to know but to do, not just to study but to perform, not just to speak clearly but to

communicate cross-culturally, not just to recognize right but to enact justice. A student completing general education and a major field of study leaves Westmont ready to live out the good news of Christ and the empowerment of education. However difficult it may be to acquire, a Christian liberal arts education exists to be given away, graciously and generously, in a lifetime of competent, compassionate service to God and to others.

# III. An Overview of General Education at Westmont

## I. Common Contexts

### A. *Biblical and Theological Canons*

Students take the following three courses at Westmont:

1. Life and Literature of the Old Testament
2. Life and Literature of the New Testament
3. Introduction to Christian Doctrine

### B. *Introduction to the Christian Liberal Arts*

Students fulfill the following two requirements at Westmont:

1. Philosophical Reflections on Reality, Knowledge, and Value
2. World History in Christian Perspective

## II. Common Inquiries

1. Reading Imaginative Literature (~~i.e., English, Modern Language~~)
2. Exploring the Physical Sciences (~~i.e., Physics, Chemistry~~)
3. Exploring the Life Sciences (~~i.e., Biology, Psychology~~)
4. Working Artistically (~~i.e., Music, Art, Theatre Arts~~)
5. Reasoning Abstractly (~~i.e., Philosophy, Religious Studies, Mathematics and Computer Science~~)
6. Thinking Globally (~~e.g., Sociology/Anthropology, Political Science, Religious Studies, Economics and Business~~)
7. Thinking Historically (~~e.g., Art History, History of Mathematics, History, Religious Studies~~)
8. Understanding Society (~~e.g., Sociology/Anthropology, Political Science, Economics and Business, Communication Studies~~)

## III. Common Skills

1. Three writing-intensive or speech-intensive courses
  - a) Writing for the Liberal Arts
  - b) Writing- or speech-intensive course within the major
  - c) Writing- or speech-intensive course outside the major
2. Quantitative and Analytical Reasoning
3. Modern / Foreign Languages
4. Physical Education

## IV. Compassionate Action

*Complete one of the following two options:*

1. Serving Society; Enacting Justice
2. Communicating Cross-Culturally

## The Components of General Education at Westmont

### i. Common Contexts

#### A. *Biblical and Theological Canons*

These courses increase students' biblical and theological literacy, providing them with essential resources for the integration of faith and learning throughout the curriculum.

**Students must take the following three courses at Westmont:**

1. RS-001: Life and Literature of the Old Testament
2. RS-010: Life and Literature of the New Testament
3. RS-020: Introduction to Christian Doctrine

#### **Interpretive Statement**

Proposals for RS-001 and RS-010 should be evaluated primarily in terms of their emphasis on biblical interpretation, whereas proposals for RS-020 should be evaluated primarily in terms of their emphasis on introducing students to Christian doctrine with an eye to specific disciplinary applications.

#### **Certification Criteria**

RS courses will constitute a center for the GE curriculum by establishing a common core of Christian knowledge and ways of thinking, and by providing a foundation for fruitful conversation with and among all the disciplines of the liberal arts. Our students will recognize that Christian faith is not an isolated mental or spiritual compartment, but that it takes shape within, and decisively shapes, personal, church, family, academic, and public life.

#### **Introduction to Old Testament and New Testament:**

Students will

1. demonstrate literacy in the content of the Old and New Testaments (i.e., books, genres, literary structures, themes, stories, chronology, major characters, histories, and theologies);
2. apply appropriate interpretive approaches to Scripture and other sources to recover original meaning and subsequent significance of the texts (for church, Kingdom, and wider world), taking into account historical backgrounds and critical issues.

#### **Introduction to Christian Doctrine:**

Students will

1. demonstrate theological literacy by identifying central doctrines of Christian faith and forces shaping the history of global Christianity (i.e., major events, texts, and debates);
2. demonstrate skills of careful reading and analysis of theological sources.

**Student Learning Outcome** (assessed as part of Christian Understanding, Practices and Affections ILO)



Students will demonstrate literacy in Christian scripture and Christian doctrine.

## **B. Introduction to the Christian Liberal Arts**

The requirements in this section introduce students early in their time at Westmont to the nature and purpose of a Christian Liberal Arts education. Although each of these requirements introduces students to the Christian liberal arts through a particular disciplinary or methodological lens, they all are intended to draw students explicitly into the questions and the concerns that we hope will pervade their entire education at Westmont. These themes include, among others: an exploration of what it means to be human; what it means to live a good life; and what it means to pursue justice as a citizen of both this world and the Kingdom of God. As a result of having fulfilled these requirements, students will have an appreciation for the development of the Christian Liberal Arts tradition. In addition, they will be on their way to developing categories of critical evaluation, sensitivity to historical context, empathic imagination, and other essential capacities of a liberally educated Christian.

***Students must fulfill the following requirements at Westmont:***

### ***1. Philosophical Reflections on Reality, Knowledge, and Value***

The Philosophy Department will have primary responsibility for this requirement, supplemented by other courses that address a comparable range of philosophical concerns. Ideally such a course would devote roughly equal time to questions of metaphysics, epistemology, and ethics (or value theory generally). However, a course that emphasizes one of these may qualify if it is largely philosophical in emphasis and it addresses each of these areas in a substantive way.

#### **Interpretive Statement**

For example, a biology course satisfying this requirement might involve a philosophical exploration of the nature of human beings, the cases for and against methodological naturalism, and the question how evolutionary processes could have produced beings that display genuine altruism. A physics course satisfying this requirement might involve a philosophical exploration of whether theism or naturalism fits better with various cosmological theories, the differing ways the study of nature has been practiced over time, and the theological perspective that might lead a Christian to value the study of physics. An economics course satisfying this requirement might involve a philosophical exploration of the extent to which humans can be considered free, rational agents, the ways in which different methodological assumptions shape economic theory, and the question how a culture's economic policies relate to its political or moral beliefs.

#### **Certification Criteria**

Courses satisfying this requirement give significant attention to the nature of reality, our prospects for knowledge, and ethical or aesthetic values. Students in such courses will

1. understand / be able to explain the importance the bearing of metaphysical assumptions on more specific matters;
2. recognize / discuss how assumptions about knowledge affect such pursuits as science, mathematics, theology, and self-understanding;
3. recognize / discuss the import of competing value claims;
4. practice identifying and assessing arguments when a thesis is proposed;
5. emerge with a sense of how to think Christianly about various worldviews.
6. Student Learning Outcome
7. Students will be able to articulate major philosophical ideas and describe their bearing on the Christian liberal arts.

## ***2. World History in Christian Perspective***

Courses satisfying this requirement will explore world history from 1300 to present. They will also introduce students to the Christian Liberal Arts through lectures and readings, and through an examination of history, which draws insights from many disciplines. Geographically comprehensive and chronologically wide-ranging, the course exposes students to the stories of diverse peoples, with the goal of challenging stereotypes and developing a thoughtful, informed approach to other cultures.

### **Certification Criteria**

Students will

1. identify important locations, events, people and ideas in world history from 1300 to the present;
2. demonstrate familiarity with main narratives in the field of world history (e. g. modernity, interdependence, globalization);
3. appreciate religious and cultural differences within and between world areas (including their own) and recognize how these change over time;
4. express the distinctive characteristics of a Liberal Arts education and explain why this is fitting for a Christian.

### **Student Learning Outcome (assessed as part Global Awareness ILO)**

Students will acquire literacy in the histories of diverse people across the globe and reflect on the importance of world history for the Christian.

## **ii. Common Inquiries**

Common Inquiries courses will, collectively, seek to introduce students to a range of methodological approaches that one might employ in the quest for knowledge. These

courses would give particular attention to various ways of acquiring knowledge and evaluating information, and would incorporate appropriate consideration of the resources and implications of information technology. Courses may be either disciplinary (taught by one professor with demonstrated competence in that methodological approach) or interdisciplinary (team taught).

### **Process for Approval of Courses**

If a course is proposed to count for a particular category, but the proposed course is in a department outside of those where there is a strong presumption of approval, the GE Committee will consult the chairs of the departments presumed to be associated with the Common-Inquiry area. Courses outside these departments may be approved by the GE Committee if the department chairs in the closely associated disciplines all agree that the proposed course meets the guidelines. It is expected that department chairs will consult the faculty in their department for formal departmental approval in cases that are difficult or ambiguous.

### **Off-Campus Programs**

The above mentioned processes may be more flexible for off-campus programs as most of the OCP courses need to fulfill different GE areas in order to attract students. Courses approved specifically for the OCPs cannot be offered on campus.

***Students take one course from each of the following seven categories.***

#### ***1. Reading Imaginative Literature***

##### **Certification criterion # 1:**

Courses fulfilling the GE category for Reading Imaginative Literature requirement will focus on written works that are imagined, invented, fictive. At least 75% of material assigned in the course (both in terms of titles and page count) will consist of written works of the imagination (i.e., plays, poems, or prose fiction—either novels or short stories) as opposed to literary criticism, critical theory, scholarly writing, textbook readings, or any other form of non-fiction.

##### **Interpretive Statement**

For example, students of drama will distinguish among some of the following: tragedies, comedies, histories, romances, farces, fourth-wall verisimilitude, epic theatre, or kitchen-sink drama. Poetry students will distinguish among some of the following: Petrarchan sonnets, Shakespearean sonnets, odes, villanelles, narrative poetry, epic poetry, elegies, or slam poetry. Students of prose fiction will distinguish among first-person, omniscient, or third-person limited novels, as well as some of the following:

epistolary, picaresque, or coming-of-age novels; realism, naturalism, or magical realism; speculative fiction, novels of ideas, and such fictional forms as the neo-slave narrative.

### **Certification Criterion # 2:**

In courses fulfilling the GE category for Reading Imaginative Literature, students will engage in close reading of imaginative texts, analyzing at the level of the individual sentence or line not just what the text means but how the text means what it means.

### **Interpretive Statement**

Students will analyze the way sentence structure, imagery, diction, and linguistic structure contribute to the meaning of the text. In reading drama, students will analyze the juxtapositions, oppositions, and reversals of individual speeches—with attention to the character’s shifting objectives, obstacles, and tactics—while also demonstrating (for Shakespearean verse) what metrical analysis reveals of the character’s emotional poise or precariousness. In reading poetry, students will analyze how rhythm, meter, rhyme, line breaks, and poetic structure contribute to the meaning of a passage. In reading prose fiction, students will analyze the way some of the following affect how the passage means what it means: point of view, narrative focus, narrative irony, situational irony, narrative structure, character development, narrative voice, the suspension of disbelief, and other literary devices.

### **Student Learning Outcomes**

- Students will be able to distinguish among genres (or sub-genres) of imaginative literature by identifying the defining characteristics, authorial purposes, and thematic implications associated with various literary and dramatic forms.
- Students will be able to analyze imaginative literature to indicate an understanding of language beyond its literal level by offering a close reading that demonstrates at the level of the individual sentence or line not just what the text means but how the text means what it means.

### **Approval Process**

The departments of English and Modern Languages should be consulted about proposals in this area. Moreover, because only courses offered by these departments—and the department of Theater Arts—involve a sufficiently substantial focus on works of imaginative literature, there is a strong presumption that only courses in these three departments will be approved for this GE area.

## ***2. Exploring the Physical Sciences***

Courses satisfying this requirement introduce students to basic properties and principles of matter, examining structure and function in elementary physical systems traditionally studied by physicists and chemists. Students should come to appreciate both creative and systematic aspects of scientific method, and should come to understand the power

of theory and prediction within the framework of empirical/experimental modes of inquiry.

### **Interpretive Statement**

The physical science general education requirement can be satisfied by taking one semester of General Physics (PH-21 or PH-23), or Physics for the Life-Sciences (PH-11 or PH-13), or General Chemistry (CHM-5 or CHM-6) – with or without the labs that normally accompany these courses. (Note that most students will automatically sign up for the labs together with the lecture courses.)

These introductory courses are usually taken by prospective science majors. By allowing these courses to be part of the GE offering we avoid situations where science majors who have already mastered quite difficult material are forced to go back and study the same topics again at a less sophisticated level.

It is important nevertheless that these introductory courses contain significant contributions to each student's liberal arts education. This means that, for instance, a discussion of the so-called "scientific method" must be included. Also, students could be assigned reading that connects their subject matter to theological or philosophical questions. Finally, it would be very appropriate to ask students to reflect in an essay on the relationship between their faith and their field of study.

### **Certification Criteria**

Students will

1. identify the basic properties and principles of matter;
2. identify the creative and systematic aspects of scientific method and give examples of the power of theory and prediction with the framework of empirical/experimental modes of inquiry;
3. articulate a model of the relationship between faith and science both historically and in the current culture;
4. demonstrate sufficient comprehension of science to read intelligently about and express informed opinions on science-related issues that affect individuals and society.

### **Student Learning Outcome**

Students will generalize how the scientific method can be used to investigate the physical and living world.

### **Approval Process**

The departments of Physics and Chemistry should be consulted about proposals in this area—and there is a strong presumption that only courses offered by these departments will be approved.

### ***3. Exploring the Life Sciences***

Courses satisfying this requirement introduce students to complex living systems within the framework of the natural sciences. Courses may either help students experience the breadth of disciplines encompassed by the life sciences or focus more narrowly on a single field of study. In either case, courses will emphasize fundamental understandings of life processes rather than the technical applications based on those principles. As appropriate, students will be introduced to the methods used to develop the models of life processes they are studying, and they should come to understand both the strengths and the limitations of those methods, especially as they impinge on a broader philosophical view of life.

#### **Certification Criteria**

Students will

1. describe the investigative approaches of the life sciences;
2. list, describe and explain processes in living systems as appropriate to the course's subject domain;
3. describe and explain diversity and variability in living organisms as appropriate to the subject of the course;
4. identify and describe controversies, positions and approaches to the interdisciplinary and theological implications of the life sciences.

#### **Student Learning Outcome**

Students will generalize how the scientific method can be used to investigate the physical and living world.

#### **Approval Process**

The departments of Biology and Psychology should be consulted about proposals in this area, and there is a strong presumption that only courses in those disciplines—and appropriate courses in Kinesiology—will be approved.

### ***4. Working Artistically***

Courses satisfying this requirement develop students' understanding of the fine arts and performing arts, including music, visual arts, or theatre. Such courses develop and expand perceptual faculties, develop foundational physical practices integral to the art form, and explore the critical principles which guide artists in the area.

#### **Interpretive Statement**

Interpretive understanding of an art form is necessary for in-depth engagement in an artistic discipline. However, interpretation alone is not sufficient to qualify a course in the Working Artistically area. Courses fulfilling this category are foundational to their discipline, require the production of at least a modest amount of art as a means of

understanding the process by which artists create, and include formal reflection on the general principles underlying artistic production. Creative production may entail wholly original work or creation/performance of previously created works, as appropriate per the specific artistic discipline.

### **Certification Criteria**

Understanding that making and interpreting in the arts are organically interrelated, courses in this area will require that students:

1. make/perform works of art;
2. effectively demonstrate creative and interpretive processes.

### **Student Learning Outcome**

Students will demonstrate artistic processes and interpretive understanding in an artistic production.

### **Approval Process**

In the working artistically area, Art, Music, and Theater should be consulted and there is a strong presumption that only courses in those disciplines—and courses in other disciplines that focus on working artistically (such as courses involving filmmaking) can be approved.

## ***5. Reasoning Abstractly***

Courses satisfying this requirement focus on critical and analytical reasoning about non-empirical, abstract concepts, issues, theories, objects and structures. Students in these courses should learn to understand and evaluate abstract arguments and explanations, analyze abstract concepts and solve abstract problems.

### **Interpretive Statement**

Though all theoretical disciplines other than the three to which this common inquiry area is restricted involve abstract reasoning, only these latter three disciplines (a) involve a relatively high degree of abstraction and (b) employ primarily highly abstract methods and study primarily highly abstract objects. Moreover, though courses in other disciplines have philosophical, mathematical, computational and logical elements, only courses in these three disciplines make such elements their primary focus. Finally, the GE committee should not assume that every course in these three disciplines would qualify as abstract reasoning courses. Only courses in these disciplines involving attention to formal methodology (argument, analysis, evaluation, problem-solving) would be adequate. So, for instance, courses that merely summarize philosophical views would not qualify.

### **Certification Criteria**

Students will be able to



1. identify instances of abstract reasoning about abstract objects or concepts (in the form of arguments, explanations, proofs, analyses, modeling, or processes of problem solving) and can distinguish premises from conclusions (or their analogues);
2. construct an instance of valid reasoning about abstract objects or concepts (in the form of arguments, explanations, proofs, analyses, modeling, or processes of problem solving);
3. distinguish valid forms of reasoning about abstract objects or concepts (in the form of arguments, explanations, proofs, analyses, modeling, or processes of problem solving) from invalid and/or fallacious forms of reasoning.

### **Student Learning Outcome**

*Students will be able to construct valid instances of abstract reasoning.*

### **Approval Process**

The departments of Mathematics and Philosophy should be consulted about proposals in this area, and there is a strong presumption that only courses in those disciplines will be approved.

## ***6. Thinking Globally***

The concept of the “global” refers to the growing interconnectedness of our world through systems of information, finance, trade, travel and migration, climate and biosphere, cultural and religious diffusion, or political engagement. To think globally is to understand how experiences or processes occurring in one part of the world carry immediate and lasting implications across vast distances. The study of these implications, in turn, fosters a reflexive awareness of our situated-ness in a given context. Global thinking should rigorously examine multiple perspectives and multi-directional influences – not simply Western perspectives of ‘others’ or the impact of the West on the rest. Global thinking should inform discussions of international crises of various kinds, for example, inequalities of power, wealth, gender, race/ethnicity, and cultural influence; or war, epidemics, environmental crises and climate change, religious extremism, market failures, and cyber security.

Fully appreciating global connections and their impact on the lived experience of people requires knowing something about the places being connected and the people being impacted. Courses that address the particular cultures, religions, histories, politics, art, and economics of diverse regions are thus an important component of global thinking.

### **Interpretive Statement**

The concept of "global" should be understood as more than a Western perspective on others outside North American society. It must connote more than "countries" and extend to various world "regions." When one thinks globally, it represents a clear



methodology with a distinct pedagogy that recognizes competing bases from which to perceive and interpret issues. Study abroad programs do not automatically produce "global" thinking. The distinctives of "global" vs. "Western" thinking must be clearly identified within the course content.

### **Committee Praxis**

These courses will bear a particular burden to relate the associated questions – particularly the question of relativism – to the Christian faith. The courses should also address the question of the relationship between Christianity and perspectives in/from other cultures. How are studies in this area related to redemptive work?

### **Certification Criteria**

Courses satisfying “thinking globally” should

1. demonstrate substantial engagement of trans-regional connections,
2. include multiple perspectives arising from these connections,
3. evaluate the impact of global processes on various world contexts and life experiences,
4. explore the ethical demands for Christians in light of the topic under study.

### **Student Learning Outcome** (assessed as part of Global Awareness ILO)

Students will be able to describe and analyze the dynamics of a particular artistic, economic, political, scientific, or social connection across cultural or regional boundaries.

### **Approval Process**

Global interconnectedness is important in a wide range of disciplines and therefore, courses in this area will be found in a number of departments such as Sociology/Anthropology, History, Political Science, Religious Studies, or Economics and Business. There is a mild presumption that only courses in these disciplines will be approved for this GE area.

## ***7. Thinking Historically***

Courses satisfying this requirement develop students' awareness and appreciation for the particularities of time and place, a sense of the complex process of change and continuity over time, and the ability to work critically with a range of primary and secondary historical texts. By studying for example specific historical periods, the history of Christianity, the history of academic disciplines, or by taking interdisciplinary courses, students should: become critical readers of a range of historical sources; appreciate the importance of historical context in shaping our understanding of the world in which we live; be able to engage in thoughtful discussions of historical interpretations; and understand the complexity of historical change.

### **Interpretive Statement**

This must not be simply a course “about” history. While the subject matter may vary, the constant feature must be introduction to, and practice of, the skills of historical research, criticism, and analysis.

### **Committee Praxis**

- In general, GE courses should be open to all Westmont College students having the typical level of preparation.
- However, upper division courses in a major other than History are not inherently ruled out of satisfying the Thinking Historically category. While they are not introductory in the major, they are introductory in the introduction to historical methods.
- Few faculty are trained as historians; therefore, there is a greater burden on courses taught by faculty outside the Department of History to demonstrate that they are, indeed, engaging in “Thinking Historically.” The course (and syllabus) must give explicit and sustained attention to the historical method addressing such issues as particularities of place and time, the interaction of the subject matter with the broader culture, change over time, and the difficulties of interpreting sources.

### **Certification Criteria**

Students will be able to

1. Read primary sources historically – asking and answering basic questions about historical sources (historical context, author, audience, genre); drawing historical conclusions from the sources and assessing their reliability and usefulness; and reflecting on how their own background shapes their interpretation;
2. Identify the arguments of secondary sources and recognize differences in interpretation.
3. Articulate responsibly how the past is relevant for the present, drawing informed connections between their study of past events and their bearing on the present.

### **Student Learning Outcome**

Students will be able to analyze historical sources with appropriate attention to their various contexts.

### **Approval Process**

Courses meeting this requirement may be found in a number of departments such as Art History, History, Music History, and Religious Studies; however, the Department of History should be consulted to determine which courses can be certified for this GE category.

## ***8. Understanding Society***

Courses develop students’ understanding of society, culture, economics, and/or politics. Students should recognize the dynamic interplay among individuals, groups, institutions,

cultural norms, and public policy. Courses provide exposure to a breadth of literature regarding models or theories that explain how we understand society. Students will reflect on how interpretive and objective theories interact with their values, beliefs, and worldviews. Put differently, students will explore questions of “what is?” and “why is it so?” to better inform their vision of “what ought to be.”

### **Interpretive Statement**

Ideally, these should be lower division courses. Upper division offerings often require a prerequisite foundation in terms of concepts, methodologies, and theoretical orientations. Upper division courses can be appropriate provided the instructor makes clear that students lacking an introductory level background in the discipline will not be disadvantaged. It is recommended that some course content reflect cross-cultural and comparative perspectives.

### **Certification Criteria**

Students will be able to

1. identify foundational theories that offer explanations of social, political, economic, and/or cultural phenomena;
2. apply foundational theories to analyze contemporary problems or controversies;
3. make personal and social application of various theories—informed by a biblical perspective.

### **Student Learning Outcome**

Students will apply appropriate foundational theories to analyze social, political, economic, and/or cultural phenomena.

### **Approval Process**

The departments of Sociology and Anthropology, Political Science, and Economics and Business should be consulted about proposals in this area. There is a mild presumption that only courses in these disciplines will be approved for this GE area.

## **iii. Common Skills**

Each Common Skills class encourages students to develop their verbal, quantitative, or physical dexterity. Students in these courses are also expected to demonstrate competence in a wide range of contemporary information technology processes.

### ***1. Three Writing-Intensive or Speech-Intensive Courses***

Students develop their communication skills at Westmont by taking at least three courses that emphasize writing fluently or speaking clearly and effectively. Such

writing-intensive or speech-intensive courses encourage students to develop their abilities to articulate information, ideas, and convictions both in written and oral discourse. Students are expected to be able to communicate effectively to a wide range of audiences, within the academy, the church, and the public. The Writer's Corner enables students at all levels to discuss writing strategies individually with peer consultants.

- a) **Writing for the Liberal Arts (4)** All students should take a writing-intensive course during their first year at Westmont. Many students will fulfill this requirement by taking English 2: Composition for the Liberal Arts. Students with qualifying test scores (i.e., SAT II) may fulfill this requirement by taking a writing-intensive course offered by any department.
- b) **Writing-Intensive or Speech-Intensive Course within the Major** All students take at least one writing-intensive or speech-intensive course in their major.
- c) **Writing-Intensive or Speech-Intensive Course outside the Major** Students completing a single major take a writing-intensive or speech-intensive course in any field outside that major. Students completing a double major take a writing-intensive or speech-intensive course in both majors. Students majoring in English may fulfill this requirement by taking an additional writing-intensive English course.

### **Interpretive Statement**

Certainly multiple assignments with a professor's feedback over the course of a semester are more beneficial in the learning process than one big project submitted at the end of the semester. However, the value of a semester-long work in progress stretches students in different ways and is invaluable to the student preparing for graduate school. The principle is four interventions in the writing process; for example, students working on a history honors paper could submit four chapters of their work during the semester. A variety of teaching methods can be used to respect both the spirit and the letter of the law: paper revision encourages students to intensify their development of a persuasive argument or critical analysis; response writing in class concentrates on content rather than form; journaling to explore ideas promotes critical thinking; summary writing is a necessary skill developing both content and form; essay examinations are evaluated on content as well as form, etc.

### **Certification Criteria for Writing-Intensive Courses**

The syllabus explicitly identifies the course as writing-intensive, and it clearly defines expectations for performance. Students are informed that their work will be evaluated for clarity and style \* in addition to content.

1. The course requires sufficient writing: at least four papers totaling at least 16 pages. Writing is spread throughout the course in a sequence of related assignments rather than concentrated in a large paper at the end. These activities may include journal writing, article reviews, essays, research papers, scientific lab reports, business

reports and plans, lab abstracts, paper revision and editing assignments, peer reviewing and editing, etc.

2. The course provides significant writing instruction or includes a substantive assignment in which students submit at least one draft for comments from the professor and then revise the draft to take account of these comments. Rewrites are typically treated as 1/3 of the original.

\* Specifically, student should be graded on

- their ability to construct a clear central message that includes purposeful and inviting ideas, insightful arguments and reasons to accept these arguments, relevant and substantive supporting material, and various audience-centered appeals
- the organization of their messages, providing appropriately creative introductions, compelling and strategic structure, smooth transitions, and an effective conclusion
- their communication style, engaging their audiences with discipline-appropriate language use and artfully constructed sentences.

### **Certification Criteria for Speech-Intensive Courses**

The course is explicitly identified as speech-intensive, and it clearly defines expectations for performance. Students are informed that they are assessed for oral communication specifics as well as for content. The course requires that students make at least three oral presentations totaling at least 30 minutes.

**Student Learning Outcome** (assessed as part of Written Communication ILO)

Students will communicate in written form for a variety of purposes and audiences across the curriculum

### ***2. Quantitative and Analytical Reasoning (4)***

Since many phenomena in our world can best be understood through quantitative and analytic methods, students should develop the ability to interpret, evaluate and communicate quantitative ideas. Central to courses satisfying this requirement is: the use of mathematical models for physical or social systems or; the understanding and communication of numeric data including the computation and interpretation of summative statistics and the presentation and interpretation of graphical representations of data. A core focus of the course should be the explicit study of quantitative and analytic methods, or, alternatively, the reflective use of quantitative methods as a tool.

### **Certification Criteria**

Students will be able to

3. make use of mathematical (including statistical) models for physical or social systems;  
-and/or-  
compute and interpret numeric data, summative statistics and/or graphical representations;
4. reflect on the strengths and weaknesses of particular quantitative models or methods as tools in the natural and social sciences;
5. be able to interpret, reflect on, and use quantitative models and data in public, vocational, and/or private decision making.

Student Learning Outcome (assessed as part of Quantitative Reasoning ILO)

Students will apply relevant scientific, mathematical and logical methods to analyze and solve problems effectively and be able to utilize the results appropriately when making decisions.

### **3. *Modern/Foreign Languages (4)***

Westmont encourages students to continue developing their fluency in a language other than their native tongue by requiring students to complete one semester of college language beyond the level of the two-year entrance requirement to the college.

Alternatively, having met the entrance requirement in one language, they may take one semester of college-level study in another language. A course in any modern spoken language (i.e. Spanish, French, or German) or ancient language (i.e. Greek or Hebrew) is accepted as fulfilling this requirement. Students are exempt from this requirement if they pass an examination demonstrating the equivalent of three semesters of college language study or present evidence of a primary language other than English to the Records Office.

Interpretive Statement

It is understood that one of Westmont's entrance requirements is two years of one foreign language. Any student who has not fulfilled that entrance requirement must complete two semesters of language at Westmont.

A student who has fulfilled the entrance requirement of two years of one foreign language may, however, change to a new language, taking one semester of a language different from that studied in high school.

The only exemptions from the one-semester language requirement are for students who have a score of 4 or 5 on the Advanced Placement Test; test out of third-semester college language, or; have a primary language, both written and oral, other than English.

Foreign language study has always been intrinsic to a traditional liberal arts education. Focused study of a language other than our native one certainly affords access to understanding diversity and multiculturalism. What is more, it enables a profound

intellectual transformation for students who lend their minds and their imaginations to different speech patterns and, thereby, different thought processes. Of course, as people of The Word, we seek to use language with respect and love. Few of us can appreciate our native language until we have worked intensely to learn one that is foreign to us and seen our own from the outside in.

### **Committee Praxis**

#### **Procedure for Fulfilling Foreign Language Requirement for Students with Language-Based Disabilities**

Realizing that learning a foreign language may be especially difficult for those with certain disabilities, Westmont offers the following accommodations for those who have a *documented language based learning disability*:

- Students may take the culture class (SP/FR 150) or
- Students may take one semester of college level American Sign Language
- In order to qualify, students must:
- Present documentation of the disability to the Director of Disability Services
- Fill out a form with the Director of Disability Services recording the documented disability
- Have the form signed by the Chair of the Modern Languages Department
- Turn the form into the registrar's office

### **Certification Criteria**

The first four learning objectives of the Foreign Language GE are based directly on the national criteria set by ACTFL (The American Council of the Teaching of Foreign Languages).

Students will be able to

1. understand and interpret written and spoken language on a variety of topics;
2. demonstrate an understanding of the relationship between some of the practices and perspectives of the culture studied;
3. demonstrate an understanding of the nature of language by comparing the language they study and their own;
4. use the language both within and beyond the classroom setting;
5. articulate the importance of learning another language in order to engage people unlike them in terms that affirm others as persons created in God's image.

### **Student Learning Outcome**

Students will be able to manage successfully a number of uncomplicated communicative tasks in straightforward social situations in a foreign language.

[Conversation is restricted to a few of the predictable topics necessary for survival in the

target language culture, such as basic personal information, basic objects, and a limited number of activities, preferences, and immediate needs.]

#### **4. Physical Education**

The physical education program is designed to provide instruction and exposure to fitness, skill-based and leisure activities. All students are required to take Fitness for Life and three 1-unit physical activity courses. A wellness-based foundation is laid in Fitness for Life, with the additional three activity courses providing reinforcement for a lifetime of physical activity.

##### **Certification Criteria**

##### **Fitness for Life requirement:**

Students will be able to

1. write and successfully implement an appropriate 9-week fitness program based on the training principles of frequency, intensity, and duration;
2. discriminate between healthy and unhealthy lifestyle behaviors.

##### **Physical activity courses:**

Students will improve in

1. one or more of the five components of fitness, including cardiovascular, muscular strength, muscular endurance, flexibility and body composition; and/or
2. one or more cognitive, affective or skill-specific components related to successful participation in the sport or activity.

##### **Student Learning Outcome**

Students will write and successfully implement an appropriate fitness program based on the training principles of frequency, intensity, and duration.

#### **iv. Compassionate Action**

***Students must complete one of the following two options:***

##### ***1. Serving Society; Enacting Justice***

Courses involve active student participation in a course with a service project, or an internship that includes significant involvement in responding to social issues. A course or internship fulfilling this requirement should deliberately raise students' awareness of issues of justice grounded in social class, gender, ethnicity or human disability; the environment; or the impact of technology. This should invite students to examine their own presuppositions and to develop their skills in their exercise of charity and compassion. The service project, which is to be explicitly integrated into the academic



content of the course, should, when possible, be performed for a non-profit organization.

### **Interpretive Statement**

Activities designed to fulfill the Serving Society; Enacting Justice section of the General Education program should substantially conform to the following criteria.

- 1) The service component should be preceded by an orientation which addresses
  - a) The context in which the work will be done.
  - b) The specific goals of the activity.
  - c) The types of reporting that will be expected.
- 2) The service component should take place in a context where the student will have exposure to one or more of the following:
  - a) Issues of economic disparity and class.
  - b) Issues of gender and ethnicity.
  - c) Issues of environmental stewardship/ remediation.
  - d) Issues of social or political disenfranchisement.
  - e) Issues of community identity, infrastructure and safety.
  - f) Issues related to aging.
  - g) Issues of disability.
  - h) Issues related to the logistics of or structures for serving society and/or enacting justice.
  - i) Other similar or related issues.
- 3) The service component may take the form of direct contact and service or may take place in a setting which addresses systemic and structural concerns.
- 4) Typically, at least 12 hours of service should be performed.
- 5) The service component should be embedded in or connected to an academic context (lecture, class discussion, seminar, readings, discussions with a mentor) which will enable student to process the experience beyond a casual level.
- 6) There should be a clear system of accountability and reporting for both performance and processing.

### **Committee Praxis**

#### **Student-run or externally-run ministries**

Students who wish to fulfill the Serving Society; Enacting Justice General Education requirement using student or externally-run ministry should enroll in the 1-unit APP 192 Service Experience Seminar. The purpose of APP 192 is to provide a means to connect academic learning and reflection with service experiences which lack the level of on-site supervision expected for an internship experience.

#### **Expectations:**

- The ministry must have a sufficient track record to demonstrate stability, good organization, effective service, and significant contact with the population being served.

- A member of the teaching faculty or a member of the staff with faculty status must lead a seminar that (a) prepares students for participation in the ministry and (b) reflects on the experience.
- The seminar should include preparatory readings which orient students to the cultural and/or social context.
- The Internship Office will not oversee such a course. The office has a different mission; conducting ministry oversight will obscure the mission and strain already stretched resources.
- Credit is granted for participation in the seminar – not for the ministry work.
- Since the seminar is intended for reflection on the field experience, successful completion of the course is contingent on appropriate engagement during the field experience. The syllabus must have some mechanism (such as a daily reflective journal) in place to monitor participation.
- Since student-run and externally-run ministries typically do not have mechanisms in place for internship-level on-site supervision and the experience is often compressed, the amount of direct contact should be approximately double (24 hours) that required for a faculty-coordinated project or a supervised internship fulfilling the Serving Society; Enacting Justice GE component.

### **Certification Criteria**

Students will be able to

1. identify theological motivations for service; the needs of the population being served; the effects and affects resulting from those needs; and the causes of those needs, such as involuntary circumstances, individual choices and structural injustices;
2. articulate how they have been affected by their experience (for example, changes in beliefs, attitudes or values) and how their experiences might inform their calling to discipleship, citizenship and future service.

### **Administrative Structure:**

1. The course is graded P/NC and a grade of pass is contingent on adequate engagement in both the seminar and the field experience components of the course.
2. In order to ensure the appropriateness of the participants for the field experience, instructor approval is required for registration.
3. Administrative procedures such as registration and grade submittal will conform to the expectations of standard courses.
4. Since APP 192 is intended to fulfill the Serving Society; Enacting Justice GE requirement, the GE Committee will review proposals (syllabi) to verify the appropriateness of the project, adequacy of the preparation and reflection, and adherence to these principles.

## **2. Communicating Cross-Culturally**

Courses involve an extended cross-cultural setting that is explicitly integrated into the course goals and content. This requirement could include any off-campus program that involves significant encounters with people from other cultures, in which the encounters are designed primarily to facilitate mutual understanding, dialogue, and appreciation. The requirement could also be met through an on-campus course providing significant opportunities for encounters with—rather than just learning about—people from other cultures in a context designed to facilitate mutual understanding and appreciation. Many Westmont study-abroad programs would qualify. Most courses taken on Consortium would not qualify unless they clearly meet the stated criteria.

### **Interpretive Statement**

The academic realm of “cross-cultural” is recognized as a distinctive aspect of formal study with its own body of literature, methods, and practices that instructors must be aware of, and incorporate into the course content.

The practicum/internship segment of the San Francisco Urban Program is acceptable providing that it meets the requirement/goal of significant encounters with people from other cultures - as approved by the Director of the Urban Program. Some types of pre-professional or occupational exposure in certain internships would not qualify.

Most Westmont study abroad programs would qualify provided they are not merely travel-based programs. Study abroad programs must provide substantive and programmatic pedagogy, interaction, and dialogue with people from “other” cultures. Courses must clearly demonstrate how students will actively engage other cultures and language, beyond the minimal contact experienced by a typical tourist.

### **Committee Praxis**

Off-Campus Programs: Off-campus program involving a home stay of 6 weeks or more are approved for fulfilling the Communicating Cross Culturally requirement. A reintegration seminar is strongly encouraged where possible. At this time such a seminar is not required.

An off-campus program without a home stay may be approved for communicating Cross-Culturally based on the program’s situated nature even though the specific activities of interaction as outlined in the syllabus may not rise to a level that would be approved for an on-campus course. In this case, the required activities are to be understood as formal markers for more general and pervasive interactions that would characterize the general living situation.

### **Certification Criteria**

Students will increase in their

1. abilities to communicate cross-culturally and to adapt effectively to new cultural environments;
2. capacities for building relationship of mutual respect across cultures;
3. appreciation for the variety and richness of human cultures;
4. awareness of their own culture.

**Student Learning Outcome**

TBD