

General Education Thinking Globally Assessment  
Executive Summary  
October 2017

During the 2016-17 academic year, the General Education Committee oversaw an assessment of the Thinking Globally component of the Common Inquiries section of the General Education program. Committee member Heather Keaney was charged with facilitating the assessment in conjunction with Dean of Curriculum and Educational Effectiveness, Tatiana Nazarenko.

Currently 35 courses fulfill this GE offered by the Anthropology-Sociology, Art, Communications, Economics and Business, English, French, History, Kinesiology, Music, Philosophy, Political Science, Religious Studies, and Spanish departments. All faculty members who teach a TGGE course participated in some way in this assessment.

This document covers

- I. Where we were
- II. Where we went
- III. Where we got to
- IV. Where we might go next

## ***I. Where we were***

**The GE Combined Document states:**

**Thinking Globally** (assessed as part of Diversity and Global Awareness ILO)

Courses (e.g., Sociology/Anthropology, Economics and Business, Political Science, Communication Studies) introduce cultural, religious, or economic issues and traditions from a comparative global perspective to equip students to be informed agents of redemption and justice in the world. Such a perspective entails encountering and understanding various “ways of thinking” (other world views) that are different from the student’s own, and exposure to a range of methodologies that extend beyond Western/North American approaches.

### **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**

1. describe differences between at least two cultures (one of which is nonwestern and can offer explanations or historical contexts for those differences);
2. recognize the value and significance of other cultures without romanticizing.
3. identify ways in which cultures influence formulations of knowledge; they will identify ways in which they personally are affected;
4. recognize global inequities, injustices, and/or inter-religious issues and commit themselves to thoughtful, concrete responses growing out of their Christian faith;
5. recognize the limits of their global understanding.

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

**Students will be able to articulate how a particular topic is approached in at least two different cultures or distinct geographical areas.**

## ***II> Where we Went***

### **Assessment Strategy**

1. Gathering data from the Registrar's office (Fall 2016)
2. Syllabi Review & feedback from TG faculty (Fall 2016)
3. Two student surveys: students who had completed before & students who were currently enrolled in TG GE course (Fall '16)
4. Pre and Post In-class direct assessment assignment (Spring '17)
5. TG faculty conversation on possible changes to the TG CC & LO (summer-fall '17)

### **Registrar's Office: How this GE is fulfilled**

It is important to keep in mind that the following data comes from the registrar's office and so addresses only the first TGGE course a student took that then fulfilled the GE requirement. Students who took a TG course on-campus could later have attended an off-campus program and vice versa.

Of the 286 students who graduated in 2015-16, 39 fulfilled their TGGE on a Westmont off campus program and 8 at a JC. Of the 273 students who graduated in 2016-17, 52 fulfilled the TGGE on an off-campus program and one in high school.

The 286 students who graduated in 2015-16 fulfilled the TG GE in the following ways.

- 152 humanities course,
- 97 Social Sciences course,
- 17 an off-campus specific (IS) course
- 12 B&NS course (food-systems Kns/Anth-140).

The 273 students who graduated in 2016-17 fulfilled the TG GE in the following ways.

- 122 Humanities
- 116 Social Science
- 26 -- IS
- 8 – KNS/ANTH- 140

The highest represented departments were English (61) and RS (45) followed by Pol-Sci (31)

and History (28). Eng 044 (world lit), which is lower division and fulfills two GEs, gets far and away the most traffic. It should be noted that of graduates in 2015-16, 59 students, or 21% of the total, and in 2016-17 64, or 23% of graduates fulfilled the TGGE with ENG 044. On the one hand this is noteworthy since there are 35 TGGE courses offered. On the other hand, this may not be surprising as it is one of the few lower division TGGEs, covers two GE categories, and is offered more often than World Music or World Art. All of which make it more likely to be taken by first year students and so it will fulfill the TGGE requirement on student transcripts. It should be kept in mind that these numbers come from the Registrar's Office and so reflect the first TG course a student took that then fulfilled the GE; they do not reflect how many TG courses a student took overall. In light of that it is worth noting which departments offer more TG courses. For example, Religious Studies offers 7 TGGE courses and History offers 5.

It would be nice to have a clearer picture of how many students take more than one TGGE, and if they take just one, do a few courses stand out. But I was not confident that the possible value added in answering this question justified the work it would require to answer it. We gathered some data from the students survey, however.

### **GE Committee Syllabi Review**

- There was slippage between the ILO of “global awareness and diversity” and the GELO of “Thinking Globally” and this was reflected in the syllabi review, with some using the language of the former rather than the specifics of the latter.
- The aspirational nature of the language was reflected in the syllabi review where a fair bit was implied rather than explicit.

### **TGGE Faculty Feedback on the TGGE language & CC:**

- The language of this GE is ten years old and reflects a view of global that emphasizes ‘international’ and ‘cross-cultural.’
- It implies cultures are isolated and rigid rather than porous, encouraging a focus on comparisons rather than inter-connections.
- Faculty agreed that CC 1-3 were important, but covered to varying degrees.
- Faculty also noted that while #4 was important, the wording was so broad that it was difficult to assess. Accordingly, it may not appear as prominently or directly in course syllabi or assignments. This was corroborated by the Syllabus Review.
- Finally, including inequality, injustice, and inter-faith issues in one CC is problematic as these are not the same thing. It enables us to claim to be addressing important issues while in practice not doing so. On the other hand, this GE has become a catch all for courses dealing with the world outside the US in the past or present, but that may not engage the inter-cultural understanding traditionally at the heart of the GE.

### **INDIRECT ASSESSMENT Fall 2016 - Student Survey**

- We issued two surveys: 1) students currently enrolled in a TG course **and** 2) those who had completed a TG course before Fall 2016. (Students currently enrolled in Northern Europe and Mexico semester took the survey.) The goal of doing the two different surveys was to check for ‘opt-in bias’ between those who chose to fill in the survey sent out through student life and those who filled it in as part of a course. In actual fact, this does not appear to have been a significant issue, or at least not in the way expected.

Nevertheless, being able to compare the two groups revealed other slight shifts along with considerable consistency.

- The survey questions were based on the current CC language in which students could answer on a 5-point scale from “strongly agree” to “strongly disagree.” For example: *“After completing the Thinking Globally course I am able to describe differences between cultural perspectives and offer explanations or historical contexts for those differences.”* Or *“The Thinking Globally course that I have completed helped me identify ways in which cultures, including my own, influence beliefs and behaviors.”*
- We also asked:
  - What other experiences have you had that have aided you in “thinking globally” as described in the questions above? And provided a list of options.
  - How important for your major is the ability to approach an issue from different cultural perspectives that you began developing in the Thinking Globally course?
  - How important do you think the ability to approach an issue from different cultural perspectives will be for you after graduation?
  - Two open-ended questions: What is one thing that you took from your Thinking Globally course? What do you wish you had learned in your Thinking Globally course?
- 102 survey responses by students who completed a TG course before Fall 2016 and 91 survey responses by students enrolled in a TG course in Fall 2016. 71% and 72% of respondents were female. 21% and 18% identified as students of color. One notable, but not surprising, difference between the two survey groups was that in the ‘before 2016’ group 57% were seniors and in the ‘current’ students 31% were seniors.
- For the ‘before fall 2016’-- 34 B&NS majors, 50 Social Science majors, and 43 Humanities majors participated. For the “current” students survey -- 29 B&NS majors, 50 Social Sciences majors, and 31 Humanities majors. These majors were selected by students in a survey question. These numbers add up to more than the total number of respondents. Some of this can be accounted for by double-majors. But not nearly enough. It could be those who started vs. completed the survey. Perhaps students also identified “possible” minors, majors, or double-majors. To be honest we do not know how to account for this gap. The number of respondents for the other questions are consistent. This did limit our ability to analyze responses based on major.
- Allowing for the above, ENG 044 drew students from the widest variety of majors in the ‘before’ and ‘current’ group. But AN/SOC 135 on Gender also drew from a wide number of majors in the “current” group. Frequently, chosen TG courses reflected majors.
- *Of the 102 “before” students 40% identified having taken only 1 TG course. 57% of respondents were seniors.*

### Close-ended Questions

In response to questions reflecting the different CC, 80-95% of students chose either “strongly agree” or “agree.”

- *One thing that did emerge from the ‘before’ vs. ‘current’ students was that “current” students consistently identified more as “strongly agree” while “before” students chose “agree.”* It seems likely that this dip in enthusiasm reflects the perspective of greater distance from the course (and the professor) in these survey results. Perhaps being closer to graduation, students are more aware of all they still don’t know. When discussing this

“dip” TG faculty pointed out it would be nice to correlate responses to demographic data, but we did not have that capability with this survey tool. (see PPT slides 2-4)

Students also “strongly agree” or “agree” that TG is important for their major and for life after graduation.

- Indeed while their assessment of how much they learned took a slight dip from “current” to “before” students, the assessment of how important TG was for life after graduation experienced a slight bump (70% of ‘current’ students “strongly agree” to 78% of ‘before’ students “strongly agree”). More of the ‘before’ survey students were seniors.

When asked “*what else aided you in thinking globally?*” of students who completed a TG course before fall 2016, 58 identified study abroad, and 98 missions trips, urban initiative, or ICP, and 32 internships. From ‘current’ students, 55 checked study abroad, 84 missions trips, urban initiative, or ICP, and 34 internships.

### Open-ended Questions

In response to the question: “*what is one thing you took from your TG course?*” “before 2016 students” overwhelmingly reflected the first three or some combination of the first three CC. At the same time #4 -- Social justice and inequality --was less represented and “concrete responses” was a negligible sub category (mentioned by only two “before” students). Some sample responses from “before” students are:

- *I am better able to understand cultures different than mine and the religions in those cultures I previously didn't know anything about*
- *I learned just how important it is to see other's perspectives and how people view the world different because of their backgrounds.*
- *I learned about how to recognize my own culture and where that influences my thoughts and my decisions, and then better recognize how culture influences others as well*
- *A deeper understanding of the injustices being committed against marginalized groups worldwide*

“Current” students did not differ significantly in the types of responses given to this question.

In response to the question “*what do you wish you had learned in your TG course?*” 23% of ‘before’ students and 26% of ‘current’ students expressed satisfaction with what they had learned. However, the highest response amongst “before 2016” students (24%) was for more practical application and engagement while 19% of ‘Current’ students stated this. A more subtly phrased sub-category of this area was a desire for guidance on how to respond not only constructively, but Christianly. In other words, help in holding on to their faith and values in light of a newly complicated understanding of cultural diversity and their own cultural subjectivity. Other responses appear shaped by the type of course students took – desire for more depth from a broader course, more breadth in a narrower course, more history in a religion course, more religion in a social science course, etc.

In ‘*further comments*’ students currently enrolled in a TG GE course praised the course, the faculty, or the pedagogy. Students who had completed the TG before Fall 2016 did so as well, but to a lesser degree. Instead they were more likely to praise their study abroad experiences.

### **DIRECT ASSESSMENT**

6 courses participated in the Direct Assessment in Spring 2017 from RS, KNS, SOC, HIS, PHI, POL. All were upper division except POL 020. The work of 50 students was assessed. (Freshman – 5, Sophomore - 10, Junior - 18, Senior – 17) The faculty of these courses met before hand and concluded we wanted an assessment tool that was: pre and post, got at higher order thinking, reflected the content of diverse courses yet was comparable across courses, and not too long.

The following prompt was proposed and accepted by participating faculty. Faculty were asked to fill in the blank with a culturally specific practice appropriate to their course.

- \_\_\_\_\_
- What are some of the cultural, historical, religious, political, and personal factors that shape this practice?
- How is your view \_\_\_\_\_ informed by your own religion, nationality, race, gender, social class, and historical moment?

We developed a rubric that blended our CC with AAC&U language on cross cultural competency. We looked at three areas: cultural self-awareness, cultural world-view frameworks, Christian reflection and application. These were assessed on a scale from “highly developed” to “initial.” (See PPT slides 6 and 7)

First year students moved from initial/emerging to emerging/developed in all three categories. Seniors moved from emerging/developed to developed/highly developed. That said, of our participating Seniors 35%, 41%, and 59% were regarded to be still “emerging” in the three categories at the *end* of the semester. On the one hand this is very worrying and deserves further attention, especially as this was the final week of their final year at Westmont. On the other hand it was the final week of their final year at Westmont... and they had other things on their mind!

There was clear benefit in doing the assessment this way; it was rewarding to see students’ growth, and in some cases significant growth, through the pre-and post assignment. However, the assignment was not integral to the respective courses and this showed. Despite faculty agreeing ahead of time to the prompt and the procedure, the assignment was used in different ways in different courses and the weighting, if any, given to the assignment, varied. In some cases, the whole ‘cultural’ framing was out of sync with the course. Unfortunately, all of this undermined the reliability and usefulness of the findings.

### **TG FACULTY ASSESSMENT OF THE TGGE ASSESSMENT**

8 TGGE faculty and Tatiana met the end of the summer and discussed the indirect and direct assessment findings. 4 other TGGE faculty gave written comments before the meeting. The conversation was long and wide ranging. We discussed the PPT slide graphs for the direct and indirect assessment responses. We also asked what we wanted from this GE. We dwelt for some time on whether the GE language should remain broad to encompass the different aspects of what is considered global or whether it should narrow and address one component of it. For example, should we change the GE to “intercultural understanding.” The argument for this was that it would clarify that the ILO of global awareness could not be met with one GE and it would facilitate assessment and accountability that we are doing what we claim to do. However, the argument for remaining TG and broad won out. This allows scope for a variety of emphases and

disciplines to participate in the GE. At the same time it was emphasized that global now means “interconnected” and systemic thinking” and that we need a TGGE that encourages this.

The entire assessment cycle, and this conversation in particular, engaged with the AAC&U “value rubrics” for “global learning” and “Intercultural Knowledge and Competence.” Our CC overlap with the “*Intercultural Knowledge & Competence*” Value rubric categories of “cultural self-awareness” and “knowledge of cultural worldviews” and the “*Global Learning*” rubric categories of “perspective taking” and “cultural diversity.” The AAC&U ‘*Global Learning*’ rubric categories that we do not address are “global self-awareness,” “personal and social responsibility,” “understanding global systems,” and “applying knowledge to contemporary global contexts.” The first is in relation to the natural and human world, and the other three categories address informed action and advocacy in meeting global challenges. Finally, innovative programs or courses on “global learning” celebrated in AAC&U literature focus on getting students engaged in issues of climate change, sustainability, water, health, migration, inequality, etc. in a way that draws on diverse disciplines and explores the connections between the global and the local. The refrain remains: “think globally, act locally.”

At the end of the August meeting, Lisa, Chandra, and Serah volunteered to join Heather and Tatiana in crafting new language and CC for the TGGE based on what was shared.

### **III> WHERE WE GOT TO**

The drafting committee decided to hone in on the AAC&U understanding of “global” as emphasizing interconnections and global systems rather than cross-cultural understanding. It was felt that most current courses could fit within the new framing. It would also more honestly reflect courses that have joined the TGGE but are not traditionally cross-cultural (such as international politics or food systems). It would also push courses and the college to be more in line with current thinking around global. The revised language was shared with all TG faculty, a few amendments were proposed and accepted. Below is the final product approved (by vote or by silence) by all TG faculty:

#### **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. Courses that address the particular cultures, religions, histories, politics, art, and economics of diverse regions are thus an important component of global thinking. 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 transnational challenges 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.

### **Certification Criteria (CC)**

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, or social connection across cultural or regional boundaries.**

## **VI WHERE WE MIGHT GO**

1. We have shifted the TG away from cross-cultural competencies and towards global processes. As a result, care will be needed to make sure we do not lose our current strength (which students affirmed in the survey) of exposing students to different cultural world views.
2. A prominent theme running through the assessment process and faculty conversations was how does this GE fit within the college curriculum, in particular the ILO of “global awareness” and the “global” distinctive.” More specifically: how can we help students appreciate that a single GE category or course does not fulfill our hopes for them in terms of “global awareness.”

One proposal that emerged at the August meeting was to identify more clearly for students four components that are frequently referenced and linked as “global.”

- a horizontal geographic axis of inter-cultural and transnational understanding
- a vertical axis of understanding systems of economic, social, and political power
- a circumference of the natural environment in which the first two axes exist and intersect
- a third dimensional axis of embodied learning through community engagement and application. (see the 1 minute, silent video that Don created to illustrate this)
- <https://www.dropbox.com/s/calmfwx8h5faana/GEEExampleGraphic.m4v?dl=0>

A college webpage for “global awareness” could identify these four components, and map out different ways students can develop in each area while at Westmont. This could foster co-curricular linkages. It could provide additional clarity on what we mean by global. It could help students see that global does not mean international. It would show that it involves more than a fulfilling a single GE. It could provide additional scaffolding to the new Global Studies Minor. It could strengthen internships and community engagement initiatives.