**New York City College of Technology  
Interdisciplinary Committee**

**Criteria for an Interdisciplinary Course**

1. **Interdisciplinary Studies Definition**

Interdisciplinary studies involve two or more academic disciplines or fields of study organized around synthesizing distinct perspectives, knowledge, and skills. Interdisciplinary study focuses on questions, problems, and topics too complex or too broad for a single discipline or field to encompass adequately; such studies thrive on drawing connections between seemingly exclusive domains. Usually theme-based, interdisciplinary courses intentionally address issues that require meaningful engagement of multiple academic disciplines. Pedagogical strategies focus on, but are not limited to, inquiry or problem-based learning.

Although many academic disciplines, such as African American Studies and Engineering, are inherently interdisciplinary, to be considered an interdisciplinary course at City Tech the course must be team-taught[[1]](#footnote-1) by more than one faculty member from two or more departments[[2]](#footnote-2) in the College. An interdisciplinary course, by definition, has an interdisciplinary theme as its nucleus. In its essence, such a course brings the analytic methods of two or more academic disciplines to bear on a specific problem or question. Thus, a course in Music History is not likely to be considered interdisciplinary, but a course in Music History from an economist’s perspective might very well lead to such a course. The application of different methods and concepts is the key to assessing whether a course is or is not interdisciplinary. The term interdisciplinary is occasionally used to identify individual projects or assignments, but these, though possibly commendable, fall short in the necessary scope for learning experiences that demand in-depth exposure to the methodologies of distinct intellectual disciplines, and the creative application of these methodologies to specific problems.

Studies show that interdisciplinary courses improve student learning (Elrod & Roth, 2012; Klein, 2010; Lattuca, 2001; Lattuca, Voigt, & Fath, 2004; Project Kaleidoscope, 2011). To foster interdisciplinary learning, the Interdisciplinary Committee has identified goals and outcomes that students taking interdisciplinary courses should be able to achieve.

**Learning Outcomes of Interdisciplinary Courses**

Students will be able to:

* Purposefully connect and integrate across-discipline knowledge and skills to solve problems
* Synthesize and transfer knowledge across disciplinary boundaries
* Comprehend factors inherent in complex problems
* Apply integrative thinking to problem solving in ethically and socially responsible ways
* Recognize varied perspectives
* Gain comfort with complexity and uncertainty
* Think critically, communicate effectively, and work collaboratively
* Become flexible thinkers

**New York City College of Technology**

**Interdisciplinary Committee**

**Application for Interdisciplinary Course Designation**

**Date: September 27, 2018 (updated 10/9/18)**

**Submitted by** Susan Phillip and Amanda Almond

**Department(s) Hospitality Management**

1. **Proposal to Offer an Interdisciplinary Course**

1. **Identify the course type and title:**  
     
   **X** An existing course **LIB/ARCH 2205, Learning Places (Special Topics)**  
   🞎 A new course \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

🞎 A course under development \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

1. **Provide a course description**

**Description:** This special topics course offers an interdisciplinary approach to investigating our built environment using a case study focused on a specific place each semester. This course combines physical examination with information research and data collection using methodologies developed in multiple disciplines. Students from a variety of departments engage in on-site exploration and in-depth research of a location in New York City.

Faculty from Hospitality Management and Social Sciences will be teaching the course this semester and will thus focus the course material through the lens of psychological/social science and hospitality and tourism.

**Context:** This special topics course explores New York City monuments and markers amidst the debate about their cultural, artistic, and historic significance. Questions of racism, colonialism, sexism, power and politics are examined of monuments and markers in all five boroughs, including Columbus Circle, the Customs House (site of the Museum of the American Indian), Green-Wood Cemetery, the statue of Theodore Roosevelt at the American Museum of Natural History, the statue “Civic Virtue,” Weeksville and others. Issues surrounding Confederate and Civil War monuments, nationally and locally, are examined. These monuments are re-evaluated and interpreted in context. “Ownership” of public spaces, historic preservation and the role of tourism are also explored.

1. **How many credits will the course comprise?** 3 How many hours? 5
2. **What prerequisite(s) would students need to complete before registering for the course? Co-requisite(s)?**

ENG1101 and One Flexible Core

1. **Explain briefly why this is an interdisciplinary course.**

The examination of racism, colonialism, sexism, power, and politics in monuments and markers in New York City and afield in this course requires students to gain knowledge using cross-disciplinary sources, including historic documents, literature, and place-based learning that will enable them to develop their perspectives about the issues. Selected readings, guest lecturers, visits to museum and monuments, a literature review and creation of an annotated bibliography will enhance students’ ability to think critically about how these monuments were constructed and this will hopefully encourage them to be more civically engaged.

1. **What is the proposed theme of the course? What complex central problem or question will it address? What disciplinary methods will be evoked and applied?**

The course addresses the question of what should happen to monuments and memorials that have been “subject to sustained negative public reaction,” as quoted in the Mayoral Advisory Commission on City Art, Monuments, and Markers Report to the City Report to The City of New York. In examining monuments and markers used to memorialize people and events, students will learn how they may reflect power relationship in our society. Students will acquire insights about how power is conveyed in monuments, analyze the motives for creating them, and question the accuracy and sources of information related to them. A framework for understanding critical theory and methods of research among social scientists will guide students in the formulation of questions when making observations, as well as the nature of their inquiries for each monument (i.e., specific to racism, sexism). Students will integrate knowledge from in-situ observation, photographs and other media and work independently and collaboratively to challenge the message implicit in some monuments and markers. By completing an investigation of a person, event or group not represented in monuments, students will develop critical thinking, communication and collaborative working skills; relying on the multidisciplinary content include theoretical orientations and methodologies. Furthermore, they will learn the value of having a diversity of perspectives and equally important, what happens when some groups are not allowed to present their perspectives.

1. Which general learning outcomes of an interdisciplinary course does this course address?   
   Please explain how the course will fulfill the bolded mandatory learning outcome below. In addition, select and explain at least three additional outcomes.

🞎 **Purposefully connect and integrate across-discipline knowledge and skills to solve problems**

Students will research monuments and markers using a variety of interdisciplinary methods, including observation and interviews, and sources including, history, art, architecture and newspapers. Working independently and as teams, students will draw and integrate their findings in site documentation reports and in their term projects. Both projects will propose students responses to the monuments dilemma.

🞎 **Synthesize and transfer knowledge across disciplinary boundaries**

🞎 **Comprehend factors inherent in complex problems**

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| Students will explore government documents, sites, archival and current periodicals, websites, and media coverage and engage in conversations to gain knowledge about how controversial monuments reveal longstanding social issues; reflections on reading, classroom activities, guest lectures, visits to museum and sites will help students to   * gain insights about power structures in society * formulate a research question that reflects their understanding of the issues * propose a monument that will add new voices to the narrative. |

🞎 **Apply integrative thinking to problem solving in ethically and socially responsible ways**

Student will demonstrate integrative thinking in their final project, which will be to develop a proposal for the creation of a monument or memorial to a person or event that they feel is deserving of one. The project will rely on questioning observations made using scientific methods and place-based learning, and require them to gain support/make a case for creating this new monument.

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🞎 **Recognize varied perspectives**

The singular narrative represented by many of the monuments studied in this course, is the cause of controversy. Students learn how monuments in public space support singular narrative and are used to maintain perches (of the monuments and groups) and the forces that are driving for more inclusive representation. This will rely on knowledge about inductive and deductive reasoning, as well as the values of scientific inquiry that make it possible to “think like a scientist.”

🞎 Gain comfort with complexity and uncertainty

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🞎 **Think critically, communicate effectively, and work collaboratively**

Students will evaluate their sources for the annotated bibliography of the final project. All assignments will require students to research how attitudes about monuments have changed over time and they will have to make critical judgments about the relevance of their sources to support their argument for removal or contextualizing. Group activities in class and a team project provide opportunities for students to exchange perspectives.

🞎 Become flexible thinkers

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🞎 Other

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**General Education Learning Goals for City Tech Students**

* **Knowledge:** Develop knowledge from a range of disciplinary perspectives, and hone the ability to deepen and continue learning.
* **Skills:** Acquire and use the tools needed for communication, inquiry, creativity, analysis, and productive work.
* **Integration**: Work productively within and across disciplines.
* **Values, Ethics, and Relationships**: Understand and apply values, ethics, and diverse   
  perspectives in personal, professional, civic, and cultural/global domains.

1. **How does this course address the general education learning goals for City Tech students?**

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| Using the City’s rich cultural and historic assets and a variety of interdisciplinary resources, students gain **knowledge** and **think critically** about how certain public symbols can convey messages of power. Students integrate information from social sciences and other media sources and make observations during place-based learning that help them to recognize societal structures in monuments and question their relevance today. By the end of the course, students will be more civically engaged in the discussion about monuments in New York City having developed their own perspective in a national debate. Students will be able to answer the question, “how is the debate about monuments reflected in civic, cultural and personal values in New York City?” |

1. **Which department would house this course[[3]](#footnote-3)?** Library
2. **Would all sections of the course be interdisciplinary**? **X** Yes
   1. **Would the course be cross-listed in two or more departments? X** Yes   
      Library and Architectural Technology
   2. **How will the course be team-taught[[4]](#footnote-4)?** **X** Co-taught 🞎 Guest lecturers 🞎 Learning community  
        
      **If co-taught, what is the proposed workload hour distribution**? 50/50  
      **X** Shared credits 🞎 Trading credits   
      If guest lecturers, for what approximate percentage of the course? 🞎 Minimum 20%[[5]](#footnote-5) 🞎 other: \_\_%  
        
      **Please attach the evaluation framework used to assess the interdisciplinarity of the course.[[6]](#footnote-6)**

See course outline for strategies that will provide professors with a feedback loop as to the extent to which students are successfully integrating disciplines during classroom time. We will co-teach, alternating sessions taught, and co-attend place-based learning (i.e., site visits). Additionally, after the semester concludes, narrative-summaries from each professor will serve as a tool to evaluate interdisciplinarity.

* 1. **What strategies/resources would be implemented to facilitate students’ ability to make connections across the respective academic disciplines?**

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| Co-taught by faculty, OpenLab will contain OERs curated by both faculty members, additional guest lecturers when available, place-based learning (site-visits), and assessments co-created by the faculty teaching. See Course Outline for *Student Resources* |

1. **Would the course be designated as:**

**X** a College Option requirement[[7]](#footnote-7)? 🞎 an elective? 🞎 a Capstone course[[8]](#footnote-8)? 🞎 other? Explain.

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1. See “Application for Interdisciplinary Course Designation” question 9b for team-teaching options. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. Exceptions are made for Departments that provide a home for multiple disciplines, such as Humanities and Social Science. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. An interdisciplinary course for the College Option requirement may be housed in a department that is not liberal arts. [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. Attach evidence of consultation with all affected departments. [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
5. While an interdisciplinary course must be team-taught, there is no formal percentage requirement, but this minimum is a guideline. [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
6. In the case that a course is equally taught, include proposed plans for faculty classroom observation and student evaluation of teaching. [↑](#footnote-ref-6)
7. To qualify for the College Option, such a course must also meet the New York State definition of a liberal arts and sciences course.  
   <http://www.highered.nysed.gov/ocue/lrp/liberalarts.htm> [↑](#footnote-ref-7)
8. A course proposed as a Capstone course must be separately approved by the Capstone Experience Committee. [↑](#footnote-ref-8)