**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** 2/6/2019

**Submitted by** David Lee

**Department(s)** Humanities

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

1. Identify the course type and title:  
     
   ☒ An existing course COM 2403 Health Communication  
     
   🞎 A new course \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

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

Provide a course description

CATALOG DESCRIPTION: The study and practice of communication as it relates to health professionals and patient outcomes. Topics include provider-patient interaction, team communication, and the diffusion of health information through public health campaigns. Students learn the basics of clear, purposeful and compassionate communication across multiple channels, to reduce errors and provide better health care delivery.

**Revised description:** The study and practice of communication in health care and public health. Topics include provider-patient interaction, team communication, and the diffusion of health information through public health campaigns. Students learn clear, purposeful and compassionate communication across multiple channels, to reduce errors and provide better health care delivery. Health communication is considered from the perspective of psychology, public health, dentistry, nursing and communication studies.

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

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| ENG 1101 |

1. Explain briefly why this is an interdisciplinary course.

Health Communication is an interdisciplinary field. Research and scholarship is conducted in psychology, public health, communication studies, nursing, etc.

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 theme of the course is effective health promotion through public health campaigns and improved provider/ patient communication. The central problem of the course is how to improve health outcomes and reduce medical errors through more effective communication.

Disciplinary methods and concepts from psychology are evoked and applied, including compliance gaining techniques, frames, heuristics, and psychological reactance. Students are introduced to media monitoring, a method from media studies, to track mentions of health care issue in the news. Students are introduced to participant observation, a method originating from ethnography.

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**

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| Here is an example of how students incorporate insights from multiple disciplines. Students can design a health campaign targeted to a specific audience, combining ideas from psychology about attitudes, beliefs and values, along with marketing concepts of how to reach target audiences, along with ethnographic knowledge about “at-risk” populations. |

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

The course is intended for allied health students, but is open to every student interested in the role of communication in healthcare and public health. Presently simulation exercises are available only to Nursing and Human Services majors, but there are many City Tech students working in health care that would benefit from them. In this respect, the insights of simulation are transferred into other disciplines besides NUR and HUS. In this course students are exposed to best communication practices from the perspective of Nursing, Dental Hygiene, and others. They are prompted to transfer psychological insights about reactance to controlling language, into the domain of a health marketing perspective. These are examples of the blending and transfer of disciplinary perspectives.

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🞎 Comprehend factors inherent in complex problems

A main takeaway of the course is to connect healthcare communication to structural and environmental factors. Pleas for “better communication” can sometimes overlook institutional and structural limitations. For example, the managed care environment necessitates brief interactions, hampering the quality of the clinical encounter between patient and provider. Sometimes, nurses or other members of a hierarchical team are hesitant to point out mistakes made by the GP. Individualistic approaches focus on the agency of the patient and their impulse control, sometimes at the expense of a structural approach that recognizes social, environmental and structural determinants. For example, a so-called “non-adherent” patient may have reading difficulties, or lack transportation to health facilities, etc. Students unpack the simplistic notion that ‘if only we communicated better, health care would work fine.’

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

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🞎 Recognize varied perspectives

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| In addition to disciplinary perspectives, biomedical rationality, as such, is characterized as a world view or perspective. Readings and discussions draw a comparison between narrative and biomedical rationality, contrasted as different perspectives and meaning-making strategies. Cultural attitudes towards health and medicine are studied and discussed, with attention to different conceptions of disease, child raising and aging. These are examples of various perspectives being recognized. |

🞎 Gain comfort with complexity and uncertainty

Students are introduced to theories and frameworks for crafting effective health promotion messages and adapting their message to their audience according to English ability, age, gender, sexual orientation, cultural background, etc. One lesson from case examples and readings is that effective communication doesn’t always follow a rigid or predictable sequence, and flexibility and adaptability are valued. Multicultural health communication involves, not a reductionist listing of “cultural traits,” but an attitude of discovery, teachability and comfort with the unknown.

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🞎 Think critically, communicate effectively, and work collaboratively

Critical thinking: Students are instructed to ask “who, what, where, etc.” questions about media texts, news stories, and face-to-face discourse, offering, not just a summary, but an informed opinion.

Effective communication: Students discuss topics in class and give oral presentations using a speaking outline. They share details from their writing prompts and are encouraged to identify with feelings, if not the factual particulars, of what is shared. Students consider their audience and adapt their message when designing health campaigns.

Collaborative work: On Discussion Board students are required to read and reply to 3 other threads, which creates a collaborative writing effort. In week 8 and 12 there are small group peer reviews where students read, discuss and evaluate each other’s work.

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🞎 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?

**Knowledge:** Students gain knowledge of multiple disciplines in medicine and social science.

**Skills:** Students acquire communication skills by simulating health encounters, crafting health promotion messages, and interacting with each other.

**Integration:** Students gain exposure to ethnographic observation, media analysis, and are prompted to apply insights from guest lectures into their work.

**Values, Ethics and Relationships:** Communication goals related to clarity, transparency and empathy are emphasized.

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1. Which department would house this course[[3]](#footnote-3)? Humanities
2. Would all sections of the course be interdisciplinary? 🞎 No ☒ Yes
   1. Would the course be cross-listed in two or more departments? ☒ No 🞎 Yes   
      Explain.

I don’t know of any Departments that would wish to list this course, but I am open to the idea.

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* 1. How will the course be team-taught[[4]](#footnote-4)? 🞎 Co-taught ☒ Guest lecturers 🞎 Learning community  
       
     If co-taught, what is the proposed workload hour distribution? \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_  
     🞎 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)

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

The interdisciplinary aspects of the field would be stressed, and guest lecturers are encouraged to emphasize communication issues and approaches specific to their background.

1. Would the course be designated as: • a College Option requirement ? • an elective? • a Capstone course ? • other? Explain.

The course fulfills the College Option requirement because it is Speech/Oral Communication and ID.

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)