

New York City College of Technology
Interdisciplinary Committee

Criteria for an Interdisciplinary Course

I. 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-taught¹ by more than one faculty member from two or more departments² 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

¹ See "Application for Interdisciplinary Course Designation" question 9b for team-teaching options.

² Exceptions are made for Departments that provide a home for multiple disciplines, such as Humanities and Social Science.

- Become flexible thinkers

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

Application for Interdisciplinary Course Designation

Date _____

Submitted by _____ Ryan McMillen _____

Department(s) _____ Social Sciences _____

II. Proposal to Offer an Interdisciplinary Course

1. Identify the course type and title:

☒ An existing course _____ *HIS 3402: Topic in World History* _____

☐ A new course _____

☐ A course under development _____

2. Provide a course description: “History 3402 is an interdisciplinary course which examines the history of the modern world over the last 75 years through the lens of the various social movements which have arisen to address issues relating to civil rights, war and imperialism, environmental degradation and preservation, religious and moral concerns, authoritarianism, globalization, and decolonization. The course will examine these movements in a roughly chronological manner, from 1945 to present, but will also necessarily study earlier movements from which the post-WWII iterations of these movements derived strength and inspiration. The course will approach the history and development of the movements using tools derived from sociology, anthropology and psychology. The course will furthermore examine social changes in the period inspired and made possible by scientific discovery and advancements in communication technologies. The course will compare the various strategies of such movements, and discuss the ways in which common strategies of collective action were employed in the pursuit of power and social change.”

3. How many credits will the course comprise? 3 How many hours? 45

4. What prerequisite(s) would students need to complete before registering for the course?
Co-requisite(s)?

- a) One lower level (1000) history course or b) AFR 1460, 1461, 1465, 1466 c) LATS 1462, 3) EG 1101

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5. Explain briefly why this is an interdisciplinary course. **While this course will discuss the social movements in a roughly chronological manner, and operate as a survey of the history of those social movements, it will seek to understand such movements, their appeal, and evolution, using sociological, psychological, and anthropological perspectives and analyses. Understanding social movements during this period also requires fluency in the technological changes and scientific discoveries which affected the reach and appeal of many of these movements through developments in communications, media, and scientific literacy. The interdisciplinary perspectives developed in African-American, Latin-American, Women's, Gender, and LGBTQ Studies will also be extensively employed and indeed, such disciplines emerged from critiques first raised within the social movements discussed in the course.**
6. 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 the study of the history and growth of collective social action after WWII. The central question will be "How did social movements of the past 75 years evolve and proliferate after WWII, and in the context of decolonization, nationalism, and developments in communications and media technology?" The course will employ methods from the disciplines of sociology, anthropology, psychology, communications, environmental science, and cultural studies. Guest lecturers will include Professor of Sociology Joseph Smith, Professor of Anthropology Marta Pitts, and Professor of Biology Olufemi Sodeinde. An additional guest lecturer from outside the college, in Media Studies, may also be invited.

7. 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.
- x **Purposefully connect and integrate across-discipline knowledge and skills to solve problems**
Several guest speakers will provide the social scientific, scientific and cultural perspectives necessary to understand the inspiration, motives, and history of the social movements discussed.

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- x **Synthesize and transfer knowledge across disciplinary boundaries**
The history of the movements will be used as the framework for understanding their development in time, but we will seek to understand the rise of each movement through sociological and psychological theory, and in the context of specific scientific and technological developments of the period.
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- x Comprehend factors inherent in complex problems

The history of social movements is inherently a complex topic given that there is never one single monolithic “movement,” but actually an elaborate weaving together of various smaller movements and interests of wildly varying intensity, perspective, and motive. Each of the larger “umbrella” movements discussed will be analyzed by focusing on these different threads. Furthermore, most of the movements discussed intersect with each other in profound ways, creating subsets of a larger movement which may develop divergent goals and methods in working toward sometimes radically different ends.

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

I believe that part of the design of the course is to encourage students to become inspired by the history of these movements and thus apply what they have learned in future collective actions in which they may choose to participate. This probably doesn’t directly address this point, but the course offers the possibility of having students understand how knowledge of the history of these movements can motivate ethically and socially responsible behavior in themselves and others.

- x Recognize varied perspectives

One of the major aims of the course is to explore the commonalities between different social movements, and to explore how different movements learn from each other. Each student will bring different perceived alliances and sympathies with various of the movements discussed, and through class discussion, students knowledge of all the movements discussed will broaden and deepen.

- x Gain comfort with complexity and uncertainty

See above “Comprehend factors inherent in complex problems”

- x Think critically, communicate effectively, and work collaboratively

Student-led discussion will be a substantial part of each class period. Each week the class will engage in close readings of primary sources related to the various movements (manifestoes, contemporary news accounts, etc.) At least two major papers and various written assignments will all be designed to promote critical thinking.

- Become flexible thinkers

☐ Other

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.

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

Please see attached “History 3402 General Education Learning Outcomes and Fulfillment”

9. Which department would house this course³? Social Sciences
Would all sections of the course be interdisciplinary? x No ☐ Yes

a) Would the course be cross-listed in two or more departments? x No ☐ Yes
Explain.

b) How will the course be team-taught⁴? ☐ Co-taught x 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 x other: 20-25%

Please attach the evaluation framework used to assess the interdisciplinarity of the course.⁶

Please see attached “History 3402 Interdisciplinary Learning Outcomes”

³ An interdisciplinary course for the College Option requirement may be housed in a department that is not liberal arts.

⁴ Attach evidence of consultation with all affected departments.

⁵ While an interdisciplinary course must be team-taught, there is no formal percentage requirement, but this minimum is a guideline.

⁶ In the case that a course is equally taught, include proposed plans for faculty classroom observation and student evaluation of teaching.

- c) What strategies/resources would be implemented to facilitate students' ability to make connections across the respective academic disciplines?

Articles, lectures, films, & oral presentations will be used to facilitate students understanding of the social scientific, technological and cultural dimensions of the social movements. Student-led team discussion will require each student to participate in a group of three discussion leaders each week, with each student approaching the particular social movement from a different disciplinary or theoretical perspective.

10. Would the course be designated as:

☐ a College Option requirement⁷? ☐ an elective? ☒ a Capstone course⁸? ☐ other? Explain.

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>

⁸ A course proposed as a Capstone course must be separately approved by the Capstone Experience Committee.