

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

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.

- 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: 7/23/24

Submitted by: Peter Parides

Department(s): Social Science

II. Proposal to Offer an Interdisciplinary Course

1. Identify the course type and title:

An existing course HIS 3402: Topics in Modern World History, 1945-Present
Section Topic: A Global History of World War Two

A new course _____

A course under development _____

2. Provide a course description _____

HIS 3402ID Syllabus Course Description:

An interdisciplinary examination of the global history of World War Two through the perspectives of diplomatic and political history, economics, philosophy/ethics, and sociology. Through the lens of these core liberal arts disciplines, students investigate the events, forces, and ideologies that contributed to the most destructive conflict in modern world history. Topics include the aftermath of World War One, the rise of fascism in Europe and Japan, the start of military conflict in Asia and Europe, the entrance of the Soviet Union and United States into the war, the Holocaust, the end of the war and the emergence of the Cold War, as well as the impact of the war on decolonization and post-war post-colonial conflict.

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

Pre-Requisites: ENG 1101 or ENG 1101CO or ENG 1101ML and a previous history course (HIS 1000 series, AFR 1460, AFR 1461, AFR 1465, AFR 1466, or LATS 1462)

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

The proposed section for this topics course lends itself to examination within an interdisciplinary course structure. Through the analytical approaches of the core liberal arts disciplines of history, economics, philosophy/ethics, and sociology, students can better investigate the forces, events, and ideologies that contributed to the most destructive conflict in modern world history. By integrating these social science disciplines, one can fully comprehend how World War Two was a “total war” of great global significance. Since the history of war, politics, and diplomacy often touches upon economics, philosophy/ethics, and sociology, it is wise to offer this proposed section topic of HIS 3402 as an interdisciplinary 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?**

This section examines two central questions about the role of World War Two in modern global history. 1) To what extent did the ideologies of modernity (nationalism, industrialism, imperialism, and capitalism) contribute to the outbreak of World War Two, and 2) How did the war and its aftermath shape the postwar world in ways that impact the present day? Students will examine these two central questions through the disciplinary approaches presented in this course: history, economics, philosophy/ethics, and sociology. As a history course, students will study historical methodology and historiography throughout the semester.

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.

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

Students will utilize guest lectures and the readings that correspond to them to examine broad questions through an interdisciplinary perspective. For example, during the first two weeks of the course, students will examine how and why the origins of World War Two emanated from the aftermath of World War One. The guest lecture for this first section of the course, “John Maynard Keynes’ warning about the Versailles Treaty,” will be delivered by Professor Randall Hannum, an economist in City Tech’s Social Science department. Students will also read a *New York Times* Op-Ed, “The Man Who Predicted Nazi Germany,” by the historian Jonathan Kirshner. Students will write a response essay about Professor Hannum’s lecture that incorporates their analysis of the Kirshner Op-Ed. Through this exercise, students will learn how and why the study of economics is integral to how historians do their work.

Synthesize and transfer knowledge across disciplinary boundaries

By the end of the course, students will be able to articulate how significant and transformative the World War Two era was by explaining how the academic perspectives of history, economics, philosophy/ethics, and sociology contributed to their understanding of the global history of World War Two. At the end of the semester, students will demonstrate this learning outcome at by writing an essay in response to the third guest lecture of the class, “War and unjust peace in Eastern Europe,” by Professor Diana Mincyte, a sociologist in City Tech’s Social Science department. Professor Mincyte’s lecture discusses the impact of World War Two and the onset of the Cold War in Eastern Europe. Professor Mincyte’s lecture serves as a broad review of the central themes of the course as it touches upon many different aspects of Eastern European life and culture. Students will also demonstrate this learning outcome by answering broad, reflective questions on the final exam.

Comprehend factors inherent in complex problems

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

Through the study of episodes of particular moral and ethical significance, such as the Holocaust and President Harry S. Truman’s decision to use the atomic bomb, students will consider the complexities involved in assessing such moral problems using the academic methods of history and philosophy/ethics. This learning outcome is integrated into the guest lecture, “Nazi war crimes and the nature of law,” by Professor Robert MacDougall, a philosopher in City Tech’s Social Science department.

Recognize varied perspectives

Students will write a historiographical essay in which they will be asked to analyze a historiographical debate, such as the dispute among historians regarding who was more to blame for starting the Cold War, the United States or Soviet Union.

- Gain comfort with complexity and uncertainty

Students will examine, discuss, and write about issues of ethical and moral complexity which have no definitive answers, such as, “Was President Harry S. Truman’s decision to use the atomic bomb ethically and morally correct?”

- Think critically, communicate effectively, and work collaboratively

By reading several short pieces of contemporary historical writing, students will examine how historians use evidence to think critically and formulate, as well as present, academic conclusions. By listening to guest lectures, students will examine how other disciplines help to inform the process of historical synthesis. Students will engage in in-class discussion following each guest lecture and will write a guest lecture response essay after each lecture.

- Become flexible thinkers

Through their study of historical methodology and historiography, students will appreciate that the formulation of historical conclusions is not an exact science, and is moreover open to constant revision.

- 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?

1. Students read, analyze, and interpret a variety of textual and video content source material. Guest lectures provide additional disciplinary perspectives. Students demonstrate their knowledge through in-class discussion and analytical writing throughout the semester.
[Knowledge]
 2. Students complete multiple types of writing assignments throughout the semester that ask them to engage critically with a variety of textual and video content source material, and are required to engage in in-class discussion with their peers. **[Skills]**
 3. Students are prompted to think critically about the disciplinary perspectives offered in guest lectures, and are required to write guest lecture response essays that ask them to integrate these interdisciplinary perspectives with the historical sources they read outside of class.
[Integration]
 4. Students think about episodes of particular moral and ethical significance, such as the Holocaust, President Harry S. Truman's decision to use the atomic bomb, and post-World War Two post-colonial conflict and violence. Students articulate their thoughts about these complex problems through in-class discussion and writing assignments throughout the semester. **[Values, Ethics, and Relationships]**
-

9. **Which department would house this course³?** Social Science

Would all sections of the course be interdisciplinary? No Yes

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

Explain.

b) **How will the course be team-taught⁴?** Co-taught Guest lecturers Learning community

If co-taught, what is the proposed workload hour distribution? N/A

Shared credits Trading credits

If guest lecturers, for what approximate percentage of the course? Minimum 20%⁵ other: __%

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.

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

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

Students are required to use information from the guest lectures and corresponding readings to answer quiz and exam questions, and write guest lecture response essays, to assess how well they integrate this knowledge into the main historical themes of the course.

10. Would the course be designated as:

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

HIS 3402/ID is already a designated Capstone Course. The proposed section topic meets the New York State definition of a liberal arts and sciences course. This course will also be designated as Writing Intensive.

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

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.nysed.gov/college-university-evaluation/department-expectations-curriculum>

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

Evaluation Framework for Interdisciplinarity
HIS3402ID: A Global History of World War Two
Professor Peter Parides

Information from guest lecturers who represent a range of disciplines is incorporated in the assessment framework for this course.

The following professors have agreed to lecture in this course:

1. Professor Randall Hannum: Economics; Social Science department.
 - Guest Lecture: “John Maynard Keynes’ warning about the Versailles Treaty.”
2. Professor Robert MacDougall: Philosophy/Ethics; Social Science department.
 - Guest Lecture: “Nazi war crimes and the nature of law.”
3. Professor Diana Mincyte: Sociology; Social Science department.
 - Guest lecture: “War and unjust peace in Eastern Europe.”

After I begin teaching this new course, I will consider other areas where the inclusion of additional disciplinary perspectives would be useful.

Integrating interdisciplinarity/guest lectures into graded assessments:

Guest Lecture Response Essays (15% of final course grade)

Students are required to write three guest lecture response essays (one for each guest lecture). The essay assignments asks students to think critically about the guest lecture and a short text that relates to the topic of the lecture. While responding to the lecture, the assignments also ask students to think about how the guest lecturer’s disciplinary perspective and methodology integrates into the main historical themes of the course.

Quizzes (24% of final course grade) and Exams (51% of final course grade)

Students are required to complete eight quizzes and three exams over the course of the semester. The quizzes and exams consist of multiple choice, true/false, and short written response questions. Quiz and exam questions are designed to assess 1) how well students retain factual knowledge, 2) how well they think critically about what they have read and heard in class, 3) and how well they integrate this knowledge into the main historical themes of the course.

Historiographical Essay (5% of final course grade)

Students are required to write one historiographical essay that asks students to think critically about a major historical question, such as “Who was more responsible for starting the start of the Cold War, the United States or Soviet Union?” Students will answer this question by explaining

how and why different historians have answered this question in different ways. To write this essay, students are required to use information from class lectures and readings, as well as Prof. Mincyte's guest lecture, "War and unjust peace in Eastern Europe."

Classroom Behavior/Participation Grade (5% of grade)

As an advanced level class, the interchange of ideas through class discussion is an important element of this course. As such, students are required to engage in class discussion. Their participation grade is based upon the level and quality of their contributions in class. The assessment of student participation is based on 1) how well students retain factual knowledge, 2) how well they think critically about what they have read and heard in class, 3) and how well they integrate this knowledge into the main historical themes of the course.

Grade Breakdown

<u>Type of assignment</u>	<u>Total number</u>	<u>How much each assignment is worth</u>	<u>Percentage of final course grade</u>
Exams	3	17%	51%
Quizzes	8	3%	24%
Guest Lecture Response Essays	3	5%	15%
Historiographical Essay	1	5%	5%
Classroom Behavior/ Participation Grade	—	—	5%
Total			100%

From: Randall Hannum rhannum@citytech.cuny.edu
Subject: Re: Keynes guest lecture for my proposed WWII ID class
Date: May 6, 2024 at 9:50 PM
To: Peter Parides pparides@citytech.cuny.edu

RH

Peter,

Thank you for sending along a draft of your course proposal. I am willing to give it a try. At this point, I am not sure what I would say for 2.5 hours, but once I dig into a little deeper, I imagine that I will come up with more than enough material.

Thanks again.

All the best,
Randy

Randall Hannum
Assistant Professor of Economics
New York City College of Technology, CUNY
Phone: 718.260.5080
Email: RHannum@citytech.cuny.edu

From: Peter Parides <pparides@citytech.cuny.edu>
Sent: Monday, May 6, 2024 3:56 PM
To: Randall Hannum <rhannum@citytech.cuny.edu>
Subject: Keynes guest lecture for my proposed WWII ID class

Hi Randy,

I've completed a rough draft of the syllabus for my proposed WWII ID class (see attached). I just wanted to confirm that you are still able and willing to give a guest lecture on Keynes' warning about the Versailles Treaty.

Best,

Peter

[Peter Parides, PhD](#)
Associate Professor of History & Government
Chair, Academic Integrity Committee
Department of Social Science
City Tech, CUNY
Namm Hall 626 · 300 Jay Street
Brooklyn, NY 11201

From: Robert MacDougall daniel.macdougall56@login.cuny.edu
Subject: Re: Guest lecture for WWII ID class
Date: May 6, 2024 at 9:55 AM
To: Peter Parides pparides@citytech.cuny.edu

RM

Hi Peter—

I'm definitely willing to do a lecture for the class. The idea I had was a discussion about natural law at Nuremberg Trials. The UN accused Nazi commanders of various crimes, and the main Nazi defense was that they were merely following (legal) orders. The trials had to proceed on the idea that it is possible to act illegally even without breaking any actual written laws. This is generally consistent with natural law theory of the nature of law (the idea that law is based in part on moral facts), but put the Nuremberg proceedings at odds with the dominant positivism in American legal thought (positivism is the idea that laws are based on social facts alone). Anyways, we wouldn't need to get too much into describing the theories to have an interesting discussion about whether people should be held legally accountable for wrongful actions that don't actually break any written laws.

Title might be "Nazi war crimes and the nature of law."

Rob

D. Robert MacDougall
Associate Professor of Philosophy
Namm 627
Department of Social Science
New York City College of Technology, CUNY
Brooklyn, NY

Author of [Righting Health Policy](#)
[Personal Website](#)
[New York City Ethics Workshop](#)

On May 3, 2024, at 11:07 AM, Peter Parides <pparides@citytech.cuny.edu> wrote:

Good morning Rob,

I'm just about done putting together my syllabus and curriculum proposal for my WWII ID class, "A Global History of World War Two". Are you still able and willing to present a guest lecture about the Holocaust? I don't anticipate offering the class until Fall 2025 at the earliest. If you are still willing, can you give me a title for your lecture?

Best,

Peter

Peter Parides, PhD
Associate Professor of History & Government
Chair, Academic Integrity Committee
Department of Social Science
City Tech, CUNY
Namm Hall 626 · 300 Jay Street
Brooklyn, NY 11201



From: Peter Parides pparides@citytech.cuny.edu
Subject: Re: F=uest lecture for a new ID class on the global history of WWII
Date: May 4, 2024 at 8:02 AM
To: Diana Mincyte dianamincyte@gmail.com
Cc: Diana Mincyte dmincyte@citytech.cuny.edu

Good morning Diana,

Yes, a "War and unjust peace in Eastern Europe" lecture would be fantastic. It would be a great way not just to introduce the Cod War, but also to review several major issues that students will have discussed over the course of the semester from another disciplinary perspective.

Best,

Peter

[Peter Parides, PhD](#)

Associate Professor of History & Government
Chair, Academic Integrity Committee
Department of Social Science
City Tech, CUNY
Namm Hall 626 · 300 Jay Street
Brooklyn, NY 11201

On May 3, 2024, at 8:42 PM, Diana Mincyte <dianamincyte@gmail.com> wrote:

*** This email originates from a sender outside of CUNY. Verify the sender before replying or clicking on links and attachments. ***

Hi Peter,

Yes, of course! I can begin with the Molotov-Ribbentrop pact and its implications for Eastern Europe. I can then cover post-war armed resistance movements in the Baltic States and Ukraine lasting into the early 1950s. This can be further deepened with the discussion of the Holocaust and the place of the Jewish populations in regional history as well as famines, deportations, and the totalitarian state during Stalin's rule. The title could be something along the lines of "War and unjust peace in Eastern Europe."

How does this sound? Just let me know what works best for your class!

Best,
Diana

On Fri, May 3, 2024, 10:16 AM Peter Parides <pparides@citytech.cuny.edu> wrote:

Good morning Diana,

It was nice chatting with you the other night. I'm putting together a proposal for a new section topic for HIS 3402ID on the history of WWII. The title of the class is, "A Global History of World War Two." I will begin the class with a discussion of how the aftermath of WWI led to the origins of WWII. I will end with a discussion of how WWII led to the Cold War. Randy will give a guest lecture of about John Maynard Keynes' speech warning that the Versailles Treaty would lead to another war. Rob will give a guest lecture about the philosophical dimensions and implications of the Holocaust and Nuremberg Trials.

Are you able and willing to present a guest lecture about the sociological effects of the Soviet takeover of Eastern Europe? Perhaps you can present the same lecture that you give in Kyle's Cold War class? I don't anticipate offering this class until Fall 2025 at the earliest. If you are willing, can you give me a title for the lecture?

Best,

Best,

Peter

Peter Parides, PhD

Associate Professor of History & Government

Chair, Academic Integrity Committee

Department of Social Science

City Tech, CUNY

Namm Hall 626 · 300 Jay Street

Brooklyn, NY 11201

From: Eric Rodriguez ERodriguez@CityTech.Cuny.Edu
Subject: Re: Support for Your ID Course Application
Date: August 24, 2024 at 10:08 AM
To: Peter Parides PParides@CityTech.Cuny.Edu



Dear Dr. Parides,

I am writing you in support of your HIS 3402ID Course Application.

I have read through the materials that you sent me, and I find your proposal to be exactly the sort of interdisciplinary class that the Social Science Department excels at. Your particular combination of History, Economics, Sociology and Philosophy shines a light on what makes our Department so unique and suitable for a class of this type and quality.

Additionally, as a WI-certified instructor myself, I was extremely pleased to see that you are proposing this ID course as Writing Intensive.

If you have any questions or require anything else from me with regards to this application, please do not hesitate to reach out.

Thanks and Good Luck!

Best,

Eric

Eric M. Rodriguez-Chan, Ph.D.
Associate Professor of Psychology
Chair - Social Science Department
New York City College of Technology
City University of New York
(City Tech, CUNY)