

Annual Assessment Report

Program: General Education

Academic Year: 2020-2021

Date of Submission:

GE Committee Chair: Dr. Stephen Contakes

I. Response to the previous year PRC's recommendations

Item: Encourage the Religious Studies department to do more work on assessing additional elements of biblical literacy like interpretation.	Response: We appreciated this recommendation and continue working with the department on their assessment projects.
Item: Encourage the RS department to discuss the changes they will make based on the assessment tool.	Response: The RS department is planning to address this issue in their six-year report due in September 2022
Item: Encourage the English, Modern Languages, and Theatre Arts departments to include sample essays.	Response: Excellent recommendation. We are planning to extend it to other Humanities departments.
Item: Encourage more collaboration with the Modern Languages and Theatre Arts departments	Response: We will be able to address this recommendation when John Blondell is back to campus from his Eastern European tour.
Notes:	

II A. Program Learning Outcome (PLO) assessment

If your department participated in the ILO assessment you may use this section to report on your student learning in relation to the assessed ILO. The assessment data can be requested from the Dean of Curriculum and Educational Effectiveness.

Program Learning Outcome	The assessment of the Reasoning Abstractly area was postponed until the 2021-2022 academic year due to the COVID-related challenges.
Who is in Charge	

/Involved?	
Direct Assessment Methods	
Indirect Assessment Methods	
Major Findings	
Closing the Loop Activities	
Collaboration and Communication	

or/and

II B. Key Questions

Key Question	<p>How to address better justice, reconciliation, and diversity in the General Education curriculum?</p> <p>In September 2020, the General Education Committee began formally considering how better to address justice, reconciliation, and diversity in the general education curriculum. Students and faculty had reached out to the Provost’s Office about such curricular revisions as early as 2016, especially after the WASC report and Diversity ILO Assessment team both highlighted the lack of a cohesive approach to diversity. Responding to this, GE committee members researched requirements at other faith-based and liberal arts colleges while also soliciting input from the Diversity Task Force and selected campus faculty. The committee then crafted a proposal which they submitted to the Academic Senate in October. Working with faculty senators, the Religious Studies department, the History department, the Provost’s Office, and the Diversity Committee, GE committee members revised the proposal to incorporate myriad suggestions and critiques. In early February, the revised proposal garnered unanimous support from the Academic Senate and was presented to the full faculty body at the faculty meeting on March 26, 2021 (Appendix A). The proposal was approved by the majority vote.</p>
---------------------	---

Who is in Charge/Involved?	Rachel Winslow and Steve Contakes spearheaded the project and became instrumental in developing the language of the proposal, soliciting input from various campus groups, and presenting the proposal to the Senate and full faculty.
<u>Direct Assessment Methods</u>	
<u>Indirect Assessment Methods</u>	GE committee members researched Diversity requirements at other faith-based and liberal arts institutions.
Major Findings	Currently, the JRD proposal is being reviewed by the Board of Trustees.
Recommendations	
Collaboration and Communication. Under Rachel and Steve’s leadership, the entire committee worked on this proposal. The Committee also collaborated with the Diversity Task Force, the departments of Religious Studies and History, and other campus groups.	

III. Follow-ups

Program Learning Outcome or Key Question	
Who was involved in implementation?	
What was decided or addressed?	
How were the recommendations implemented?	
Collaboration and Communication	

--

IV. Other assessment or Key Questions related projects

Project	
Who is in Charge /Involved?	
Major Findings	
Action	
Collaboration and Communication	

V. Adjustments to the Multi-year Assessment Plan (optional)

Proposed adjustment	Rationale	Timing

VI. Appendices

A. Justice, Reconciliation, and Diversity Proposal

Justice, Reconciliation, and Diversity Proposal

March 26, 2021

Overview

In September 2020, the General Education Committee began formally considering how better to address justice, reconciliation, and diversity in the general education curriculum. Students and faculty had reached out to the Provost's Office about such curricular revisions as early as 2016, especially after the WASC report and Diversity ILO Assessment team both highlighted the lack of a cohesive approach to diversity. Responding to this, GE committee members researched requirements at other faith-based and liberal arts colleges while also soliciting input from the Diversity Task Force and selected campus faculty. The committee then crafted a proposal which they submitted to the Academic Senate in October. Working with faculty senators, the Religious Studies department, the History department, the Provost's Office, and the Diversity Committee, GE committee members revised the proposal to incorporate myriad suggestions and critiques. In early February, the revised proposal garnered unanimous support from the Academic Senate.

The Justice, Reconciliation, and Diversity GE proposal includes three key parts:

Part 1: Updates elements of general education language to better emphasize the importance of moral formation and responsibility in our liberal arts GE program and to frame conversations related to diversity.

Formal Motion: To approve updates to general education language in the catalog in the following sections: *The Purpose of General Education at Westmont* and *An Introduction to General Education at Westmont*.

Part 2: Adds a *Justice, Reconciliation, and Diversity* requirement that asks students to consider structures of inclusion and exclusion, with a particular focus on present and historical issues of race in the United States.

Formal Motion: To approve a new General Education requirement, *Justice, Reconciliation, and Diversity*, to be located alongside our emphasis on writing, speaking, languages and service.

Part 3: Renames and reframes the common skills category to *Common Fluencies*. This change will enable our GE to better support engagement with diversity issues and also align the category with a more robust vision of the liberal arts.

Formal Motion: To approve a renamed and reframed common skills category, titled *Common Fluencies*, in order to offer a more robust vision of the liberal arts.

Justice, Reconciliation, and Diversity Proposal, Framing Language (Part 1)

This proposal encompasses two main classes of change (with 3 separate components comprising the first change). Each shift is explained under a separate heading.

1(a): Minor changes to the GE framing language to better emphasize the importance of moral formation and responsibility in our liberal arts GE program.

Proposal

The General Education Committee proposes minor changes to the framing language under *The Purpose of General Education at Westmont* and *An Introduction to General Education at Westmont* aimed at gently clarifying that:

- Although part of our emphasis on the liberal arts includes learning for its own sake, as appropriate such learning should be brought to bear on issues of practical and societal import;
- Our culture may exhibit aspects of brokenness from the personal to the systemic that stand in need of reconciliation and redemption;
- Our graduates' membership in diverse communities includes moral responsibilities which develop from commitment to the gospel;
- Diverse communities occur at both the local and global levels.

Rationale

We believe that these changes are consistent with the original spirit of the GE combined document and serve to clarify existing commitments. This includes convictions that Christians are called to the ministry of Christ's work of reconciliation and that in such work liberal arts perspectives offer valuable contributions in extending justice and reconciliation at the local and global level.

1(b): Changes to the framing language for the *Biblical and Theological Canons* GE area to better emphasize that one aim of these classes is to lay a foundation for other GE conversations, including conversations related to diversity.

Proposal

The General Education Committee proposes that the framing language for the *Biblical and Theological Canons* GE area be adjusted to better emphasize that one aim of these classes is to lay a foundation for other GE conversations, including conversations related to diversity. Specifically, we propose the following language (changes underlined):

A. Biblical and Theological Canons

These courses increase students' biblical and theological literacy, providing them with essential resources for the integration of faith and learning throughout the curriculum.

Students must take the following three courses at Westmont:

- RS-001: Life and Literature of the Old Testament
- RS-010: Life and Literature of the New Testament
- RS-020: Introduction to Christian Doctrine

Interpretive Statement

RS courses will constitute a center for the GE curriculum by establishing a common core of Christian knowledge, addressing the ways the gospel of Christ directs us to live and act, and by providing a foundation for fruitful conversation with and among all the disciplines of the liberal arts and areas of the GE. Our students will recognize that robust Christian faith is not an isolated mental or spiritual compartment, but is shaped by and shapes decisively informs, personal, church, family, academic, and public life. Thus these courses lay a foundation for students to think deeply about worship; the communion of saints; mission; evangelism; the prophetic identity of the Body of Christ as one people birthed from all nations, tribes, peoples, and languages; and our shared work toward justice and reconciliation in a fallen world as they explore other GE and curricular areas.

Proposals for RS-001 and RS-010 should be evaluated primarily in terms of their emphasis on biblical interpretation, whereas proposals for RS-020 should be evaluated primarily in terms of their emphasis on introducing students to Christian doctrine with an eye to specific disciplinary applications.

Certification Criteria (only including the sections modified)

Introduction to Christian Doctrine:

Students will

1. demonstrate theological literacy by identifying central doctrines of Christian faith and forces shaping the history of global Christianity (i.e., major events, texts, debates, and contexts);
2. demonstrate skills of careful reading and analysis of theological sources.

Rationale

This change was developed in conjunction with the Religious Studies department. Its aim is to better clarify that one aim of the Old Testament, New Testament, and Christian Doctrine courses is to lay a foundation for further explorations of what it means to live out the gospel in the real world. The Religious Studies department intended for the list of issues to be illustrative, not exhaustive. In including issues of diversity, the Religious Studies department recognizes that gospel includes bold humility in witnessing to the kingdom of the Triune God.

1(c): Changes to the framing language and certification criteria for the *World History in Christian Perspective* GE category

Proposal

The General Education Committee proposes that the *World History in Christian Perspective* GE category include explicit consideration of how historical trajectories shape contemporary issues relating to race, ethnicity, migration, and justice in the United States and globally. Specifically, we propose adding one clause to the framing language and one certification criteria.

B.2. World History in Christian Perspective

Courses satisfying this requirement will explore world history from 1300 to present. They will also introduce students to the Christian Liberal Arts through lectures and readings, and through an examination of history, which draws insights from many disciplines. Geographically comprehensive and chronologically wide-ranging, the course exposes students to the stories of diverse peoples, with the goal of challenging stereotypes and developing a thoughtful, informed approach to local and global cultures.

Certification Criteria

Students will

1. identify important locations, events, people, movements, and ideas in world history from 1300 to the present;
2. demonstrate familiarity with main narratives in the field of world history (e. g. modernity, interdependence, globalization);
3. appreciate religious and cultural differences within and between world areas (including their own) and recognize how these change over time;
4. understand how historical trajectories shape contemporary issues relating to race, ethnicity, migration, and justice in the United States and globally;
5. express the distinctive characteristics of a Liberal Arts education and explain why this is fitting for a Christian.

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

Students will acquire literacy in the histories of diverse people across the globe and reflect on the importance of world history for the Christian.

Rationale

This change was developed in conjunction with the History department and recognizes how historical global trajectories have ongoing local implications. The proposed change is designed to enrich our ability to produce thoughtful scholars, grateful servants, and faithful leaders for the particular local part of the academy, church, and world in which Westmont is embedded.

Justice, Reconciliation, and Diversity Proposal, New Requirement (Part 2)

Proposal

The General Education committee proposes that the Academic Senate consider the creation of a new GE requirement titled, “Justice, Reconciliation, and Diversity” (JRD). This GE requirement would be an “overlay” requirement in that most, if not all, qualifying courses would satisfy at least one other GE requirement, typically a common inquiry.

Proposed Language

Justice, Reconciliation, and Diversity

Courses satisfying this requirement deepen students’ understanding of the value-laden processes of social inclusion and exclusion through institutional, cultural, and normative practices. They provide students not only with a rigorous academic space in which to explore differences in perspective, but also foreground reasoned and respectful discussion about how best to live out the biblical vision for reconciliation and human flourishing to achieve common ground. Indeed, God’s sovereignty over creation and Christ’s reconciliation of all things renews how we understand and relate to others as we experience increasing conformity to God’s image through the sanctifying work of the Spirit.

Although these themes resonate around the globe, issues of justice and reconciliation among diverse communities are of particular urgency in the United States. Thus, while there is value in considering diversity issues in nonlocal contexts or the abstract, courses meeting this requirement need to give substantive attention to historical, institutionally embedded, and ongoing practices of inclusion and exclusion in the United States.

Interpretive Statement

The Westmont statement on “Biblical and Theological Foundations of Diversity,” commits to “the investigation and embodiment of diversity [as] a basis for excellence in scholarship and community life and anticipates the character of the world to come by signaling in our own time and place God’s promised reconciliation of creation to himself. Hence our living out of diversity bears witness to the redeeming work of Christ, and marks us with greater integrity as we proclaim his salvation” (Col 1:15-21; 2 Cor 5:16-21; Acts 10). Courses should amplify this commitment by exploring diversity not for its own end, but as a means to redressing unjust systems and practices in ways that are commensurate with the Triune God’s call to enact justice for the poor, marginalized, and oppressed.

For the purposes of JRD courses, social categories under the mantle of diversity include: race, ethnicity, gender, sexuality, socio-economic status, and disability.¹ While social categories as conceived by humans may change over time and space, names must be given to such categories if existing systems of influence and institutional realities are to be understood and examined. In addition to naming categories, each course should include a breadth of perspectives on systemic injustices so that students have an opportunity to see how ideological commitments inform understandings of justice and reconciliation. While qualifying courses can certainly highlight regions outside of the United States, to satisfy the GE requirement, JRD courses must give special attention to injustices in the United States, emphasizing historical and contemporary U.S. contexts with clear applications to race and other social categories.

Including justice and reconciliation in this GE's title signals that courses must not only detail "difference" but must also interrogate the implications of "difference," especially in political, social, economic, and cultural policies and practices. Along with this, courses must also guide students to develop a hopeful vision of how they might apply what they have learned in a variety of contexts such as churches, workplaces, and neighborhoods.

Certification Criteria

Courses satisfying JRD should

1. develop frameworks for biblically and theologically informed understandings of diversity, reconciliation, and social change on a variety of levels. These frameworks should be robust enough to enable students to recognize their responsibility in the work of reconciliation and social change within their own communities;
2. examine social norms, systemic practices, and historic patterns of enfranchisement and disenfranchisement, of belonging and marginalization, by exploring race [and racism] and at least one more category including ethnicity, gender, sexuality, socio-economic status, and disability;
3. facilitate critical reflection by requiring students to make connections between the course material and contemporary life in the United States;
4. emphasize and model respectful interaction as an integral component of the course.

Student Learning Outcome for Justice, Reconciliation, and Diversity (assessed as part of the Diversity ILO)

Students will apply a biblically and theologically informed framework to critically evaluate the ways in which diversity and applications of justice and reconciliation within

¹ These categories are specified in the Diversity ILO.

the United States shape the experience of citizens and persons residing in the United States.

Rationale

As articulated in the framing language of the proposed requirement, issues of diversity are intrinsically important for understanding the human condition and living out the gospel amid attitudes and practices of exclusion inimical to human flourishing. Moreover, to develop faithful leaders, there is an especially pressing need for the College to provide students with the skills and sensitivities to understand and respond to diversity, not just as global reality, but also as a domestic one. Students themselves are demanding and expecting more nuanced responses to these issues from administrators, faculty, and staff. “As a Christian Liberal Arts institution, Westmont’s graduates must be equipped to address issues of systemic injustice in our diverse family with firm knowledge, sensitivity, Christian love, and charity,” in the words of the 2016 Diversity Institutional Learning Outcome Assessment. Such training will help them to fluently understand and responsibly navigate the world outside of the Westmont community.

Additional Points of Clarification

1. This proposal addresses a lacuna in our GE’s support for Westmont’s Diversity ILO, according to which graduates are expected to effectively analyze topics and human experiences using categories such as race, ethnicity, gender, sexuality, socio-economic status, and disability with respect to a biblical vision of human flourishing. It recognizes that, to do such analysis effectively, students need a robust Biblical and theological vision of human personhood, calling, and purpose as well as an equally rigorous biblical engagement with the categories of race, ethnicity, gender, sexuality, socio-economic status, and disability. The former (a Biblical/theological vision of flourishing) may be acquired through the Biblical and Theological Canons GE subcategory as it is currently envisioned, but our existing GE curriculum does not require students to engage the latter (demographic/social realities in *relation* to flourishing, defined not in terms of power and wealth but conformity to the gospel). This proposal also recognizes how misappropriation of these categories can give rise to systemic and institutional injustices. Further, while this is a worldwide human problem, it is one which assumes a particular form in the U.S. context of which Westmont forms a part. Thus, to prepare students to think, serve, lead, and enact reconciliation in the academy, church, and other spheres of life, students need two things. First, they need an understanding of the historical, social, and institutional trajectories in the United States which represent a marring of the biblical vision of human flourishing, defined as a life lived in glory to God experiencing increasing conformity to God’s image through the sanctifying work of the Spirit. Second, they need practical tools for promoting justice, reconciliation, and other biblically robust categories of human flourishing.

2. This proposal addresses needs identified by faculty, students/alumni, and administrators.
 - Faculty have previously noted relevant shortcomings in the GE. To quote the 2016 Diversity Institutional Learning Outcome Assessment: “The current ‘hit-and-miss’ approach (no requirement, some courses address the topic specifically)” means that “some students become very competent due to varying experiences throughout the curriculum,” yet this “leaves a sizable segment of the graduates in very precarious stages of development.”
 - Surveys of college alumni have pointed to existing Westmont courses that transformed their views on systemic racism and justice. The alumni’s concern is not that such courses don’t exist, but that most students can graduate from Westmont without taking one of these courses.
 - The administration has committed to addressing relevant curricular gaps. In a letter to faculty on March 5, 2020, the Executive Team wrote, “we want to continue reviewing our curriculum to ensure it incorporates more voices that have been excluded and widens our lenses on historic and systemic issues.” This proposal addresses this need.
3. In proposing a Justice, Reconciliation, and Diversity GE category, the GE committee recognizes that it is possible to strengthen existing GE areas in ways that prepare students to better understand systemic injustices and work toward reconciliation. Given the complexity of this task and the importance of preserving appropriate degrees of breadth and focus in existing GE areas, however, the GE committee has determined that such development can be better accomplished through courses that rigorously consider issues of diversity, explore brokenness between people and institutions in the United States, and promote justice and reconciliation.
4. There are liberal arts precedents for programs like the envisioned Justice, Reconciliation, and Diversity requirement. Peer institutions have rapidly been adding similar GE requirements (Wheaton in 2016, College of William and Mary in 2019, for instance).
5. In requiring JRD courses to consider the U.S. context, the committee does not seek to exclude study abroad courses which engage issues of diversity outside the United States. Such courses can meet this requirement by also considering issues of justice, reconciliation, and diversity in the United States.
6. The committee envisions that many students will be able to meet this requirement through a prerequisite-free introductory course, although some disciplines might offer one or more upper division courses that satisfy this requirement.

Impact

Budget/Hiring: The GE requirement for JRD will draw primarily on existing courses that 1) already meet the certification and SLO criteria, 2) have few or no prerequisites, and 3) already satisfy at least one GE, or major, requirement. The committee has identified 21 existing courses

that satisfy these criteria (appended to the end of this document). As such, there are no new hires required, and no new courses need to be developed to launch this requirement. (Of course, we welcome faculty to develop courses that satisfy these criteria so that we can develop even more robust offerings in the future.)

General Education Requirements: While the JRD requirement adds a new item to the GE, it does so primarily as an “overlay” in partnership with other GE and major requirements. While courses approved for the JRD requirement would not need to meet any other GE requirements, typically they would satisfy at least one additional GE requirement. For instance, a student could enroll in PHI-137 (Justice and Public Policy), which already satisfies the Understanding Society and Thinking Globally GE requirements. In this way, it would operate similarly to the Quantitative and Analytical Reasoning and Writing and Speech Intensive GE areas.

Student Scheduling: Since JRD courses typically satisfy at least one additional GE and/or a major requirement, there is minimal impact on student schedules. Depending on course offerings in a given semester, it is possible that only a few courses offered might fit into a student’s schedule. Even with this happening, it is still unlikely to pose a significant setback. The committee can work with department chairs in high-requirement majors to ensure that their students are not negatively affected.

Potential JRD Course List (21)

BIO-197. Biology and Faith*
EB-102. Intermediate Microeconomics*
ENG-002JRD. Composition: Rhetoric of Civil Rights--WLA
ENG-006JRD. Studies in Literature: US Ethnic Lit.--RIL, WSI
ENG-060JRD. Writers in Conversation: [Rotation of minority American lit. topics]--RIL, WSI
ENG-060JRD. Writers in Conversation: Race in American Lit --RIL, WSI
ENG-060JRD. Writers in Conversation: American Immigrant Lit.--RIL, WSI
ENG-134. Race and Ethnicity in American Lit--WSI
ENG-143JRD. Topics in Writing: Intersectional Autobiographies--WSI
ENT-010. Introduction to Ethnic Studies--US
HIS-177. Transnational America--TG, TH
HIS-178. California Experience--US
IS-144. Sociology of Immigration and Urban Poverty (WSF)--US
KNS-140/AN-140. Food Systems--TG, SS
KNS-181. Special Populations--SS
PHI-137. Justice and Public Policy--US, TG
POL-113. Race and Politics--*proposed US*

PSY-132. Cultural Psychology--*proposed TG*

SOC-189. Sociology of Race and Ethnicity--*proposed US*

TA-001. Great Literature of the Stage--RIL, WA

TA-140. Ethnicity and Gender on the American Stage--WA

*Working with the department on satisfying certification criteria.

Change Common Skills to Common Fluencies Proposal: Part3

Proposal

The General Education Committee proposes that the GE category Common Skills be renamed *Common Fluencies*. We have rewritten the area's framing language to better articulate its representation of a Christian liberal arts sensibility. With this reframing, the Justice, Reconciliation, and Diversity requirement will fit into this category.

Current Language:

II. Common Skills

Each Common Skills class encourages students to develop their verbal, quantitative, or physical dexterity. Students in these courses are also expected to demonstrate competence in a wide range of contemporary information technology processes.

Proposed Language:

II. Common Fluencies

Fluencies courses encourage students to develop facilities for living well in a complex, diverse world. These include the capacity to lead healthy lives, communicate with verve and grace in various local and nonlocal cultures, use and understand numerical information, and reflect the kingdom of God in responsibly working towards biblical justice and reconciliation in a fallen world.

Rationale

The current category and language reflects an understanding of written and oral communication, quantitative literacy, language fluency, and physical education at odds with how faculty teaching these courses articulate their importance and, arguably, a robust understanding of the liberal arts. Moreover, the current category does nothing to address information technology competency. We therefore propose that the existing framing language be replaced with language that better reflects our current Christian liberal arts vision of what these competencies represent.