

DIVERSITY IN THE UNITED STATES (DUS)
September 1, 2015

I. Short Description

Students will develop an understanding of racial, ethnic, class, and gender diversity in the United States. Courses in this area will focus on the conceptualization, definition, and structuring of these various identities in the United States. These questions may be approached from various vantage points, including: historical, artistic, literary, political, economic, scientific, social, and/or cultural life. Students will gain a critical understanding of how the intersection of various facets of diverse identities shapes the experiences of individuals and groups as well as collective institutions and outcomes. All courses are expected to reflect on biblical and theological themes related to diversity in the U.S.

II. Thematic Core Learning Outcomes and Interpretation

A. Students will be able to....

1. critique the sources and consequences of patterns of injustice and inequality in regards to marginalized groups in the United States
2. critically and respectfully engage with the experiences and perspectives of marginalized racial, ethnic, class, and gender groups in the United States, as well as one's own experiences as a cultural being
3. articulate a Christian theological understanding of human diversity and unity

B. Expansion and interpretation of the outcomes statement

We live in a time when racial, ethnic, cultural, class, gender and many other dimensions of difference between persons individually and as groups are both celebrated and the focus of division and strife. The Protestant evangelical church which is the constituency of the Wheaton College community has not historically been at the forefront of addressing effectively these issues. In 2001, the faculty of Wheaton College passed "A Faculty Resolution Regarding Diversity Issues" calling our institution to renewed and deepened resolve in addressing these issues. Noting that the institution of the church at Pentecost "was the commencement of a new community in which ethnic, cultural, linguistic, political, or national differences are... means through which God can be listened to, worshiped, and obeyed," and that our calling to unity requires the pursuit of "*shalom* – a 'peace-with-justice'," the document calls upon us to value racial, ethnic, cultural, and gender diversity. But more is required of us. Any honest grappling with diversity in the United States also requires us to recognize that groups identified along racial, ethnic, cultural, class, and gender lines too often have been marginalized, treated unjustly and inequitably. Diversity in the United States courses will provide students the ability to understand and explain the ways the culture of the United States has tolerated or even fostered such unjust and inequitable treatment historically and/or reproduces such in the present, empowering students to respond constructively and redemptively to these realities.

1. Learning Outcome #1: Students will be able to critique the sources and consequences of patterns of injustice and inequality in regards to marginalized groups in the United States.

*"*Marginalized groups*" refers to those groups identified by gender, race, ethnicity, language, class, or other social identify who, on the basis of their membership within these groups, have not been represented in, or had equal access to, economic, social, cultural, or political

influence. The marginalization of the group could be understood as historic – for example, the Irish and Italians who faced strong discrimination when arriving in New York in the 19th Century – or contemporary, but in every case there is an implication of comparative power and influence vis a vis the dominant majority.

*“*Patterns of injustice and inequality*” is meant to draw attention to the centrality of structures, systems in the experiences, cultural forms, and social realities of marginalized groups in the United States. The intention is that students would articulate historical, structural and/or cultural aspects of inequality among marginalized groups in the United States *in terms appropriate to their discipline*.

*“*Towards marginalized groups*”: It is understood that many courses will primarily address a single community or identity in the United States (e.g., African Americans, Native Americans, Latino/as, Asian Americans, women, and so forth), but the course should also address the interrelated nature of identities (such as race, ethnicity, class, and gender) identifying as appropriate diversity within communities and groups. Social identities such as those organized around religion or sexuality are theologically complex yet reflect important elements in the discussion of diversity in the United States. Courses addressing such topics will foster rigorous and nuanced thinking grounded in Wheaton’s theological and scriptural commitments as stated in institutional documents so that students develop the ability to engage U.S. religious groups and sexual identities in productive and God-honoring ways.

2. Learning Outcome #2: Students will be able to critically and respectfully engage with the experiences and perspectives of marginalized racial, ethnic, class, and gender groups in the United States, as well as one’s own experiences as a cultural being.

*“*Experiences and Perspectives*”: The goal of this focus is to encourage students to understand the course’s marginalized group on their own terms, rather than solely through the imposition of categories from without. It is understood, of course, that members of any group would have a wide variety of experiences and perspectives; thus this is not a singular or monolithic area of study. However, it is important that students can speak about the expressions of those who belong to marginalized groups in the United States in ways that reflect that language, history and context recognizable to those who would identify with that group, while also engaging in analysis of that group with additional analytic or critical categories relevant to the disciplinary perspective of the course.

*“*Diverse racial, ethnic, class, and gender groups*”: It is understood that some courses will focus primarily on a single group defined around such identities as race, ethnicity, class, and gender. The significant focus of the course will be around the experiences and perspectives of that group with awareness of the intersections of diversities and identities (e.g., class, gender, ethnic) at a social or personal level. It would also be entirely appropriate to focus on experiences of multiple groups as a way to gain access to experiences and perspectives. (For example, a course on African American Literature, or gender in a course on Women in American Politics intersects with other identities present in the community such as women in the African American community for the African American Literature course, or women of color in the Women in American Politics class.) Thus, while it is not necessary that a single course identify more than one group as the focus of the class, students should be able to articulate the intersections of social identities within that group.

*“*Respectfully engage*”: Demonstrating respect for the experiences and perspectives of others always includes the ability to write and/or speak without stereotyping, using belittling

language, or demonstrating attitudes of derision or disrespect. Another sign of critical reflection and respectful engagement with the experiences of a marginalized group will be students' active learning from the knowledge and experiences of the cultural group(s).

**“One’s own experience as a cultural being”*: The notion of “culture” here is meant to be loosely understood as encompassing identity, practices, norms, ethnicity, racial identity, heritage, gender, and so forth. It is not meant to limit a student’s view of him/herself to one dimension related to the course. At the same time, a student taking a Diversity course should leave with a robust ability to speak about his or her own subject position as shaped by a variety of social categories such as race, ethnicity, class, and gender.

3. Learning Outcome #3: Students will be able to articulate a Christian theological understanding of human diversity and unity.

**“Human diversity and unity”*: Because all human beings – women and men of all cultures and languages – are made in the image of God, diversity is both part of the created order and inherently good. Human sinfulness has marred the beauty of God’s created order so that human differences are also an occasion for sin and brokenness to be manifest in human life. Students should be able to articulate the theological basis for understanding diversity. In courses studying other religious traditions, students should be able to articulate the commitments, suppositions, and/or methods of other religious traditions on their own terms. Students should demonstrate theological discernment and respect as they interact with and learn from marginalized Christian communities.

The overarching goal of Diversity in the United States courses is to expose students to the reality of social diversity while considering how we should respond as Christians to patterns of injustice or marginalization. Students should grow in their awareness and appreciation for our brothers and sisters in Christ outside their own groups or contexts.

4. Diversity in the United States Courses and GEL Programs

Students who successfully complete domestic GEL courses or a domestic GEL approved program will satisfy the Diversity in the United States theme if the GEL course or program has applied for and received approval from the Curriculum Committee for meeting the Global Perspectives outcomes.

III. Guidelines

A. Expanded Description

None given.

B. Connection between area outcomes (Part II above) and the 12 overall program goals of Christ at the Core (see p. 8-9 of the Proposal)

1. The Diversity in the United States theme supports “Christ at the Core,” Holistic Learning Goal #4: These courses are devoted to examining different dimensions of diversity within the United States from a Christian perspective.

2. The Diversity in the United States theme supports “Christ at the Core,” Wisdom Learning Goal #3:

Engagement with and self-reflection regarding diversity in the United States will help students with “growing in intellectual virtue and critical self-awareness.”

3. The Diversity in the United States theme supports “Christ at the Core,” Maturation Learning Goal #4: These courses will help equip students to better love and serve their neighbors and God.

C. Examples for Assessment

Given the diversity of courses from across the disciplines that will be under the theme of Diversity in the United States, faculty may employ those discipline-appropriate measures of student success to determine achievement of the three learning goals.

A range of rigorous assignments could provide evidence that students have successfully achieved the three Student Outcomes given in section II.A. Depending on the structure of the course, one significant assignment might be relevant for assessing more than one outcome; in other cases a series of assignments will be more appropriate. A few examples and suggested approaches are offered here as *possible inspiration* of disciplinary appropriate and rigorous options, but **use of these exact assignments is not required**. Faculty are encouraged to go beyond these or substitute other creative assignments as they develop individual courses.

1. Assessment of Outcome 1: Developing a critique involves making a defensible argument. This can be accomplished in larger projects involving oral presentations or written papers but could also be addressed in essay questions and other forms.
2. Assessment of Outcome 2: Engaging with the perspectives of others and one’s own perspective involves learning and reflection. A wide range of assignments could assess this ranging from reflection journals to test questions and responses to larger projects.
3. Assessment of Outcome 3: Articulating a Christian understanding should be an important component of at least one assignment. Tacking it on to the end of a task – such as a single paragraph addressing Christian concerns at the end of a research paper – would not have the same rigor as assignments that ask students to consider Christian understanding throughout.

D. General Advice

For this theme in particular, experiential learning should be emphasized and valued. Assessment techniques most amenable to experiential learning activities should be strongly supported.