

Contemporary Social Issues
Distribution List**Description**

Insights gained through the study of contemporary social issues take on a critical significance at a time when the world's population is increasing rapidly and diverse societies and cultures are coming into closer contact, and in some cases, with intensifying conflict. Questions of class, civil society, gender, public health, justice, and identity continue to be pervasive in societies around the world today. Various methods of inquiry test for connections between the familiar and the exotic, the traditional and the contemporary, and the individual and the group. The general intent of this requirement is to provide an introduction to the social world, meant to serve as a foundation or starting point for further exploration of these topics through electives, major fields of study, and/or minors. We do regard the understanding of human relationships and their consequences to be the center of the Civic Engagement curricula. These courses provide a foundation for both the how and the why of civic engagement.

Core Curriculum Objectives

The following criteria must be met for each course in the distribution list:

1. As citizens of local, national, and global communities, these courses will equip students with the moral foundation, cultural context, and/or knowledge and skill sets for informed and constructive civic engagement.
2. The courses will provide an introduction to contemporary societal topics—including but not limited to social, cultural, moral, religious, political, economic, communication/informational society, and health and environmental issues—in ways that provide students fundamental knowledge of the topic.
3. Students will explore the inter-connectedness of factors/phenomena that contribute to the complexity of societal issues.
4. Courses will demonstrate that social issues do not develop or impact society in isolation of other factors.
5. Students will gain a deeper understanding of and empathy for individuals and groups from other societies, races, religions, genders, ethnicities, and socio-economic statuses, with the intent that they will be able to articulate and practice the virtues of compassion and justice in our world today.
6. Students will learn about the major social and economic processes at work in our world today including but not limited to globalization, resource depletion/destruction, cross-cultural intolerance, religious and ideological differences, social and economic disparities, and communication coherence.
7. Students will learn to evaluate and form critical opinions based on their own assumptions and religious identities around local, regional, and global contemporary issues. In this process, students will be able to discern between descriptive and normative modes of moral analysis.

Criteria

- Students will take one 3-hour course in the Contemporary Social Issues Distribution List.
- Courses may be at any level (1000, 2000, 3000, or 4000).



- Department Requirements: Courses with a methodological focus in the social sciences, theology, and philosophical ethics are eligible. Courses will only be taught by scholars who have expertise in the subject matter, theoretical foundations, or ethical underpinnings that relate to contemporary social issues and apply social scientific, ethical/moral, or philosophical approaches to their research programs.

Justification

- The Arts & Sciences core curriculum will equip students with the knowledge and skill sets for informed and constructive civic engagement as citizens of local, national, and global communities. The courses in the Contemporary Social Issues Distribution List will empower students to engage with current social and political issues intelligently and reevaluate their own assumptions. Students will gain a deeper understanding of and empathy for people from other societies, races, religions, genders, ethnicities, and socio-economic statuses. In this way, students will be able to articulate and practice the virtues of compassion and justice in the pursuit of peace.