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.