

General Studies at Stockton

Stockton's distinctive General Studies program constitutes the University curriculum's commons, the place where students and faculty with various specializations meet to find common ground.

The program was designed on basis of three premises:

1. The world of knowledge and ideas is essentially seamless and is not really divided into discrete compartments.
2. The important problems that students should confront, e.g., war and peace or environmental issues, can't be understood by any single academic discipline alone. Not surprisingly, modern scientific advances often depend on interdisciplinary approaches.
3. Changing workforce trends suggest that graduates will change not only jobs but also careers more frequently than has been the case in the past. Flexibility, the capacity for lifelong learning and, in particular, the acquisition of generic, transferable skills will be requisite in the current and future economy.

These notions do not mitigate the importance of specialized preparation through a degree major. Specialized education and the resulting expertise in a field will continue to be important to graduates, and to society at large. However, the University believes that specialized knowledge alone does not provide all the preparation that students need for the future; both general studies and the disciplinary major are important in a liberal arts environment where excellence is pursued.

The distinctive feature of the approach at Stockton is that General Studies is provided through a separate curriculum and academic school. The University believes that breadth of education is not well served by simply requiring students to take introductory courses in various disciplines, as is the case at some other institutions.

Traditional introductory courses in most disciplines are usually designed as the first step in a major for students who wish to specialize, rather than providing breadth of understanding for the non-major and general student. General Studies courses are intended to enrich one's learning, to provide for explorations of new fields, to provoke and stimulate new thinking, to encourage experimentation and to test one's perspectives; these intentions are often addressed in ways that cross the boundaries of individual academic disciplines.

Faculty members in all Schools at the University teach General Studies courses. The courses may study a problem or theme or offer a survey of related topics. What the courses have in common is that they are designed to explore ideas, stimulate critical thinking and provide breadth of perspective for all students regardless of major.

As the General Studies curriculum is not a foundation curriculum consisting of introductory courses, students take courses in this area throughout their college career. Learning is a lifelong process, and as such, one of the most important abilities a student can develop is the capacity to plan and manage learning experiences.

At Stockton, the student's preceptor should play an important role by helping the student develop this ability in the major and in general education courses. In order to provide concrete meaning to the general concepts outlined above, the University has defined a number of desirable goals for the general education of all students. When you propose a new General Studies Course, you will be asked in a drop-down menu to align 2-3 General Studies Learning Objectives with your Essential Learning Outcomes (ELOs) and IDEA objectives – in addition to explaining your G-group area goals.

General Studies Learning Objectives

Objective 1: Commitment to lifelong learning, to the exploration of new ideas outside one's specialization, and to placing one's own knowledge in the context of other disciplines and of society as a whole.

Objective 2: Commitment to citizenship, through the ability to make informed decisions about public issues—while conscious of one's responsibility for doing so and of one's responsibility as an individual for the social whole. General Competencies

Objective 3: Ability to reason logically and abstractly and to comprehend and criticize arguments.

Objective 4: Ability to understand numerical data so as to be able to comprehend arguments and positions that depend on numbers and statistics.

Objective 5: Ability to write and speak effectively and persuasively.

Objective 6: Capacity for “reflective reading”—entering into personal dialogue with a text.

Objective 7: Development of a conceptual framework with which to assimilate new experiences—and the ability to adapt it as necessary. General Content Experiences

Objective 8: Appreciation and understanding of artistic experiences as reflections of the depths and quirks of the human spirit.

Objective 9: Scientific knowledge of the physical and natural world, and understanding how that knowledge is attained and evaluated.

Objective 10: Historical knowledge of the continuities and conflicts common to humans across eras and cultures.

Objective 11: Awareness of the achievements and perspectives of people of different nations and cultures, and of different races, genders and ethnicities.

Objective 12: Understanding of the techniques, findings and procedures of the social sciences as they relate to social structures and to evaluating issues of public policy.

Objective 13: Critical understanding of one's own values and those of others, and of their role in making ethical choices.