

### **Characteristics of the Common Core course, Human Behavior and Social Institutions**

As outlined in the General Education Report (March 2003), the Common Core courses should provide disciplinary content and an interdisciplinary component that encourages students to view the major disciplines as related, and should include some instruction in the fundamental literacies. The possible disciplinary content of the Human Behavior and Social Institutions core course includes, but is not limited to, Anthropology, Economics, Geography, Political Science, Psychology, and Sociology.

The characteristics that provide a framework or common structure across versions of Human Behavior and Social Institutions offered in any one of these disciplines is outlined below.

#### **General Characteristics**

The General Education task force developed a set of characteristics that should be present in all common core courses:

- should introduce students to the nature of inquiry in the particular discipline
- should have some interdisciplinary component
- should address ethical issues that arise in the context of course material
- should include instruction in one of the fundamental literacies (writing, speaking, critical thinking, quantitative reasoning, computer literacy, information literacy, visual literacy)

The General Education Report is available at [http://www.iusb.edu/~gened/Forms/GenEd\\_RepRec.pdf](http://www.iusb.edu/~gened/Forms/GenEd_RepRec.pdf)

#### **Specific Characteristics**

...to develop insight into human nature and the nature of social institutions. Human nature refers to those characteristics that are thought to be the essential essence of the individual. Debates about what constitutes human nature and even if such exists pervade all inquiry into social life. Social institutions refer to the myriad ways that individuals organize to live as a community. These institutions include the family, schools, community groups, governments, economic institutions, et al. The structure of these social institutions, their interplay with each other, and individual's relationship to and with these social institutions are subjects of inquiry in this course.

...to develop insight into the major events and social processes that have shaped the world of the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

Human behavior and social institutions do not exist in a vacuum nor do they change on their own. To understand human behavior and social institutions, one must contextualize their development over time. Wars, economic depressions, social upheavals, natural disasters, and political conflict all influence the course of human behavior and the development of social institutions.

...focus on the individual in relation to and as a product of that world.

Individual identities are not only shaped by personal psychology but by the cultures and society in which they reside. This core course will examine how individuals structure their own identities but also how social institutions and norms help to construct their identities as well.

...to introduce students to the distinctive perspectives of the social sciences...emphasize the analytic frameworks and techniques social scientists use to explain the causes and patterns of individual and

institutional behavior. Social scientists use a variety of frameworks and methodologies to analyze individual behavior and social institutions. Courses in this core will utilize several of these frameworks to illustrate how we do research in the social sciences. Whether it be the use of statistical modeling, ethnographic studies, elite studies, or behavioral studies, students should be introduced to a variety of ways that social scientists gather and analyze information. They should also be challenged to reflect on the scientific limitations of the methods, techniques, and models used in the course, and to consider the values and hidden biases that may influence the outcome of an intellectual or experimental project within the social and behavioral sciences.