

## Mission of the Core Curriculum

The Core Curriculum of the University of Detroit Mercy fosters skills that will prepare students to participate more fully as thoughtful, creative, compassionate, engaged, and successful members of the global society as reflected in the Jesuit and Mercy identities. This course of study demonstrates a commitment to educate the whole person through active participation in a scholarly community. Students will learn to communicate effectively, think clearly, and integrate the intellectual, spiritual, ethical, and social aspects within their personal and professional lives.

## Diversity

Diversity courses are those courses that distinguish, generally through comparison, two or more ethnic, racial, and/or world cultures from the traditional Western culture. These courses must treat cultural diversity and difference itself as a significant concept of the course, to be defined and illustrated.

## Core Objectives

### **Quantitative and Symbolic Reasoning Criteria**

Estimation and number sense:

- Demonstrate number sense. Estimate and check answers to mathematical problems in order to determine reasonableness, identify alternatives, and select optimal results.
- Calculate and interpret percentages, ratios, and proportions.
- Make use of basic financial concepts for assessing loan options and comparing investment plans; demonstrate familiarity with the mathematics of basic financial management.
- Demonstrate an understanding of the mathematics of voting and apportionment.
- Correctly use and convert different units of measure.
- Use technology, particularly the calculator, appropriately when solving problems. Be aware of rounding and truncation errors. Correctly use order of operations.

Mathematical modeling and problem solving:

- Interpret mathematical models such as formulas, graphs, tables, and schematics, and draw inferences from them.
- Make use of exponential and linear modeling---for understanding the behavior of populations, prices, tumors, and drugs in the blood.

Statistical and Probabilistic Reasoning:

- Demonstrate understanding of elementary probability---for assessing travel and health risks, understanding lotteries and medical tests, and making decisions about insurance policies.
- Demonstrate understanding of statistical reasoning---for reading statistical studies and evaluating them critically.
- Recognize that mathematical and statistical methods have limits.

## Critical Thinking /Informal Logic

1. To give the student the skills needed to construct sound arguments of one's own, and to evaluate the arguments of others.
2. To imbue the student with a sensitivity for the logical component of language, a thorough command of which is indispensable to clear, effective and meaningful communication.
3. To instill in the student the dual capacities of intellectual empathy (the ability to see a complex issue from multiple points of view), and intellectual autonomy (the ability to independently decide what one will believe, in a principled and informed way).
4. To require the student to offer reasons or evidence to support his/her views (and demand them from others), which provides a fundamental defense against prejudiced attitudes.
5. To impart to the student an understanding of the kinds of reasons and evidence appropriate to supporting different kinds of claims, including (but not limited to) scientific, literary, historical, and theological claims.
6. To habituate the student to be sensitive to inconsistency as a fatal flaw in any theory or point of view, which proves a useful device in disclosing ill-conceived positions in any realm of human thought: political, scientific, social, etc.
7. To facilitate the students' reflection on the relationship between informal logic and other ways of making sense of ourselves and the world, such as the fine and creative arts, literature, theology, and science.
8. Navigating the media, avoiding deception by advertisers, and understanding ballot initiatives.

*The following central concepts must be mastered in order to realize the goals listed above:*

- Premises and conclusions
- Arguments and non-arguments
- Deduction and induction
- Validity, truth, soundness, strength, cogency
- Categorical propositions
- Categorical syllogisms
- Informal fallacies
- Analogical arguments, legal and moral reasoning
- Causality, and hypothetical/scientific reasoning
- Statistical reasoning

## Technical Skills across the Curriculum

### 1. Computer Literacy

- Distinguish between applications and operating systems
- Identify components of a personal computer and network systems
- Manage files effectively: save and retrieve, download, backup, share
- Understand and use security measures: e.g. physical access passwords, anti-viral software, firewalls

### 2. Information Access and Retrieval

- Access organizational databases and external data
- Perform effective Internet searches, understand Boolean logic
- Comprehend copyrights, licensing, plagiarism and ethical issues in using the Internet
- Recognize and employ appropriate practices to ensure the confidentiality, integrity, and availability of data

### 3. Information Documentation, Organization and Analysis

- Prepare quality word processing documents
- Demonstrate effective word processing tool usage
- Design simple Web pages using Web based tools
- Create spreadsheets for re-use
- Create charts and graphs from spreadsheet data
- Input information into databases through tables and forms
- Organize, manage, sort, and filter data via spreadsheet and database tools

### 4. Information Sharing and Communication

- Create effective electronic presentations
- Use e-mail effectively: e-mail etiquette, attachments, hyperlinks
- Prepare reports incorporating spreadsheet and database information

### 5. Information Evaluation

- Perform Internet research and digital libraries
- Research and understand differences between academics, professional, public news services, commentaries, and other sources of information
- Discern validity of information and sources

## Writing across the Curriculum

1. Academic essays should contain evidence of the following skills:

- responsible (documented use of other's ideas and language)
- demonstration of careful reading, especially reading that enables students to distinguish an author's argument from the arguments the author disputes
- effective research (demonstration of which would indicated ability to locate and evaluate sources)
- evaluation of audience, such that an essay's emphasis is on that which the readers do not already know or do not already believe, and such that the form and tone are appropriate
- ability to organize an essay into a coherent whole
- selection for the adopted readership of appropriate facts
- avoidance of cliché and stereotypes

2. For clarity, students should demonstrate:

- good topic sentences
- economy of expression
- parallel structure
- accurate pronoun reference
- unambiguous placement of modifiers
- the punctuation, spelling, and grammatical usage of Standard Written English
- varied and mature sentence structure

3. Students should cultivate a writing process that enables them to:

- explore ideas and raise questions that orient their inquiry
- generate ideas, feeling, facts, and details
- engage in self-analysis and revision

## Communications

1. Deliver an extemporaneous speech (a speech in which the speaker has an outline/notes of the planned message, but creates the wording as he/she goes along) effectively to an audience, including:

- the organization of ideas into simple outline units;
- the use of a supplementary aid in delivering the speech;
- the effective use of and transition between parts of a speech (i.e., introduction, main points, conclusion);
- an understanding of the elements of an extemporaneous speech, including vocal tone and variations, use of eye contact, body language and gestures, and the use of notes;

2. Deliver an original manuscript speech (a speech that must be read word for word, typically when care is needed in the choice of words) with an awareness of how this differs from an extemporaneous speech (writing in oral style, the dangers of reduced eye contact and vocal variations).

3. Demonstrate sensitivity to one's audience including:

- an awareness of characteristics of an audience that can affect their ability or willingness to pay attention to, understand, and/or accept the message of the speech;
- an awareness of diversity in one's audience and its effect on the effectiveness of one's public speaking;
- awareness of factors that reduce speaker credibility and demonstration of techniques for raising speaker credibility;
- an ability to inspire and handle audience participation, including questions, comments, and disagreements.

4. Students must show an awareness of sources of information and evidence, other than themselves or other students, for their speeches.

## Reading across the Curriculum

Students should demonstrate the ability to:

- use a variety of methods for enhancing reading comprehension (e.g., relying on structural cues and context for word identification, recalling prior knowledge related to a topic, making predictions, generating questions to be answered from reading, rereading, and self-monitoring)
- go beyond the literal interpretation of sentences toward an analysis of an author's purpose.
- use text characteristics (e.g., type, genre, structure) as an aid in constructing meaning
- recognize the characteristics and forms of a variety of oral, written, and visual texts (e.g., narrative, dramatic, poetic, expository, argumentative, and persuasive)

## Freshman Experience

The freshman experience will be a prospective course within the core. The course will focus on one contemporary topic that reinforces developing basic foundational skills, as well as acting as a springboard to future core electives. As a multidisciplinary course, guest lecturers selected from UDM faculty will present their professional perspective on the chosen topic.

## Physical Sciences

- Acquire basic contemporary science literacy that will enable students to understand and participate in science with a non-professional level of expertise. Core science literacy must reflect the interdisciplinary dependence that each respective field has on other science fields. (Example: Role of math in biology)
- Students should understand the distinctively empirical methodology of the physical sciences: formulating hypothesis, experimental testing, setting up an experiment, recording results, writing a summary of the findings, etc.
- Recognize the interdisciplinary aspect of science, not only to other forms of scientific inquiry, but to fields of study outside of science.
- Identify ethical boundaries and implications of contemporary science advances.
- Understand and appreciate the historical development and social impact of science.

## Social Sciences

### Criteria for the Social Sciences

- Students should understand both the qualitative and quantitative methods of the social sciences, including various types of descriptive research, correlational research procedures, and true experiments.
- Students should become knowledgeable consumers about the use and misuse of quantitative research findings from the social sciences in public life.
- Students should understand how the social sciences use their methodology to study major areas of both personal and public life, including family life and personal relationships across the lifespan, and the major economic and political systems of the contemporary era.
- Students should understand the interplay between the social sciences and other academic disciplines, such as the connections between history, political science and geography, the areas of convergence between biology and psychology, or the contributions of different disciplines to hermeneutics and semiotics.
- Students should gain exposure to the major ideas of central theorists from at least two of the social sciences, which are defined here as the disciplines of

anthropology, economics, geography, linguistics, political science, psychology, and sociology.

## Mathematics

- Students should demonstrate the ability to represent mathematical information symbolically, visually, numerically, and verbally.
- Students should be able to solve problems using mathematical (arithmetical, algebraic, geometric and statistical) methods.
- Students should be able to effectively and appropriately use technology to assist in problem solving and presentation.
- Students should be able to use quantitative, symbolic, and statistical reasoning to communicate, interpret, and hypothesize about data.

## Philosophy

Students should understand the logical method of philosophy and the kinds of questions it addresses, its major areas of study, and its importance in rationally evaluating their own beliefs and the beliefs of others.

- Students should understand the role of western philosophy as a foundation for other modes of inquiry.
- Students should be able to articulate some of the central issues of philosophy, questions concerning truth and knowledge, reality, moral values, and social justice.
- Students should have an awareness of the rich diversity of philosophical viewpoints and traditions around the world.
- Students should understand the basic elements of the western philosophical method, as rooted in the logical analysis of arguments.
- Students should acquire the skills to provide rational support for their beliefs, and to fairly and reasonably evaluate the positions of others.

## Religious Studies

The study of religion encourages students to reflect meaningfully on their beliefs and belief traditions, and is an important aspect of understanding one's self. The study of the belief systems of other cultures also fosters a more inclusive world community.

- Regardless of their own personal beliefs, students should develop an appreciation of the role of religion and spirituality in human life and society.
- Students should be aware of the various methods developed by religious leaders and scholars to analyze and interpret religious texts, beliefs and practices.
- Students should understand the foundations of Catholicism and other Christian traditions, as well as the foundations of Buddhism, Hinduism, Islam and Judaism.
- Students should understand the ethical teachings of the major world religions, especially as they relate to the pursuit of social justice.
- Students should be acquainted with the founding ideas of the Jesuit and Mercy charisms.

## Historical Knowledge

History is a form of inquiry and understanding that puts special emphasis on how the past influences both the present and the future, by examining the forces and processes of historical change and continuity. Students should be familiar with major historical events that have shaped both Western and non-Western cultures, as well as the diversity of interpretations of these events. This includes an understanding of the way historical evidence is discovered, evaluated and interpreted. Studying the past sheds light on the present, and is an essential aspect of shaping a humane and just world.

- Demonstrate the ability to understand and appreciate the forces of historical continuity and change.
- Demonstrate an understanding of the relationships among historical events, culture and social forces.
- Demonstrate an awareness that history and the writing of history influences culture and social perspective, and that culture and social perspective influences history and the writing of history.
- Differentiate among historical and contemporary perspectives about the world with a view to creating a humane and just world.

## Literature

1. Students should develop an awareness of the diverse literatures and genres that express human experiences and represent varied cultural perspectives.
2. Because a change in one's critical approach can alter the resulting interpretation of a work of literature, students should be introduced to a variety of approaches to literary

texts. That is, an approach that emphasizes formal beauty, symmetry, and internal structures of a work will yield different interpretations than one that studies the sociological content of the work, which will in turn be different from one that emphasizes the psychological profile of the author or of the characters. Students should also gain an appreciation of the way these approaches complement, overlap with, or conflict with each other and with the perspectives of other disciplines.

3. Students should be exposed to some problems associated with representation. What does it mean for a story to be true, can one story stand in for many stories, and can one person speak for other members of an identity group?

4. Students should demonstrate the ability to write an analytic essay that makes use of a specialized literary criticism vocabulary to address issues in specific texts.

----

Guidelines from Standards for the English Language Arts sponsored by NCTE and IRA:

Students read a wide range of literature from many periods in many genres to build an understanding of the many dimensions (eg., philosophical, ethical, aesthetic) of human experience. Students read a wide range of print and nonprint texts to build an understanding of texts, of themselves, and of the cultures of the United States and the world; to acquire new information; to respond to the needs and demands of society and the workplace; and for personal fulfillment. Among these texts are fiction and nonfiction, classic and contemporary works .

## Fine and Creative Arts

The study of art is essential for the complete education of the whole person. Artistic knowledge provides students with insight into the creative process, non-linear modes of thinking, problem-solving and expression. The intent of the fine arts requirement of the core curriculum is to foster a deeper understanding of the human condition and to develop the critical listening,

observation and thinking skills necessary for the appreciation and understanding of cultural artifacts. "Art" is understood to encompass many forms of artistic expression, including but not limited to theater, music, film, painting, sculpture, architecture and the graphic arts.

- Demonstrate basic visual and aural literacy.
- Understand the historic development of an artistic form and be able to locate specific works within that tradition.
- Understand the relationship between artistic production and the culture in which it arises.
- Be aware of the multiple interpretative possibilities of any artistic production and how they change over time.
- Be able to evaluate works of art in light of aesthetic principles and historic precedent.
- Be able to distinguish works of fine art from products of popular and vernacular culture.
- Acquire the critical and technical vocabulary to describe, analyze and formulate cogent arguments about artistic works and be able to apply those principles to the examination of an immediate, personal experience with a work of art.

### **Ethics, Social Justice, and Professional Responsibility**

Our capacity to recognize each other as moral agents, and to guide our decisions and actions by that recognition, is an essential feature of being human. Built on this recognition, an ethics education enables the student to think in terms of the right and the good in human action.

- Develop an awareness of the moral worth of all persons.
- Identify situations that require ethical judgment.
- Formulate and support an ethical judgment by assessing the relevant values, principles, rights, and responsibilities of all concerned.
- Compare and contrast ethical theories by evaluating their strengths and weaknesses.
- Recognize at both a personal and professional level the importance of ethical action in the service of social justice.