

Model V: Thematic

The International Experience: Integrated Studies of the Contemporary World

The International Experience Program consists of interdisciplinary, team-taught courses, that explore contemporary issues and their historical foundations using an integrated approach. The program stresses critical thinking and writing.

The Contemporary World: 8 semester hours

INTC 111: Authority and Discovery (4 semester hours)

INTC 112: Liberty and Power (4 semester hours)

Topical International Courses: 16 semester hours

Four of the following courses:

INTC 221: The Experience of War

INTC 222: Prospects of War and Peace

INTC 231: Gender, Sexuality, and Culture

INTC 232: Topics in Gender

INTC 233: Imaging the Self

INTC 234: Imaging the World

INTC 241: Energy, Resources and Pollution

INTC 242: Population, Hunger, and Poverty

INTC 243: Conservation and Sustainable Development

INTC 244: Post Colonial Issues

INTC 245: History and Perspectives on Development

INTC 246: Cases in Development (usually J-Term abroad)

INTC 247: Cultures of Racism

INTC 248: Twentieth Century Mass Movements

INTC 249: Human Rights

INTC 251: Cultural Globalization

Global Justice: 4 semester hours

One of two 300 level courses:

INTC 326 The Quest for Global Justice

INTC 329 Personal Commitments: Global Justice

First Year Experience Program: 4-8 separate semester hours

Inquiry Seminar: Writing (4 semester hours)

Inquiry Seminar: 190 (double dips with INTC 112)

January Term (4 semester hours—usually double dips with a GUR or major requirement)

Science and Math: 8 semester hours

Science and Scientific Method (4 semester hours)

Mathematical Reasoning (4 semester hours)

Two **Perspectives on Diversity**--fulfilled by courses taken for the Core or within the major.

Physical Education (4 semester hours)

Senior Seminar/Project (2-4 semester hours—double dips with major requirement)

Total Hours: 44-48 separate hours

Summary and Evaluation: Model V: Thematic

This kind of thematic model is, obviously, constructed around a common theme. This version consists of two common introductory courses. It then provides students a wide, but limited choice of topical courses. It concludes with a required culminating course. It also has separate (non-thematic) requirements in writing, science, math, and physical education.

A thematic approach can offer a great deal of coherency (II.2.a.) and make it possible to include a clear rationale (II.3.a. and III.4.b.). This can also add to its marketability and attractiveness (III.2.). The common courses in this version call attention to engagement in the world (I.1. c.), attention to global issues (I.4.c.), attend to the discernment and formulation of values (II.4. d.); and to understanding the world from various perspectives (II.4.f). The topical courses provide opportunities for students to pay attention to social diversity and justice (I.4. b.) and to care for the earth (I.4.c). The program as a whole pays attention to large questions of value and meaning (I.1.b.); clear and creative expression (II.4.a.); critical reflection (II.4.c.); and interaction with others (II.4.e.). A thematic program has a more limited number of courses that count than the more distributive models. This does help with assessment (III.5.a) and supervision (III.6.a).

A thematic approach has some limitations, especially when trying to serve a large student population. There must be widespread interest in the chosen theme among students and faculty. The common courses require intentional faculty training if they are to be taught well and consistently. When they include team-teaching, more investment in faculty development may be necessary. There is the necessity of gaining widespread buy-in on what the goals and intentions of the program and specific courses are to be. Since thematic course are by design interdisciplinary, the institution needs faculty who can teach across disciplinary boundaries and are prepared to engage in ongoing development in areas outside the academic discipline in which they did their graduate work (a thematic model is not faculty just discussing the theme from their specific area of expertise). If this kind of model were the one and only general education program, the university would need many faculty who are prepared and willing to teach in this interdisciplinary manner. Departments would probably need to be able to offer their major and minor with a faculty of less specialized scholars and teachers (this can be seen as both a strength and a weakness). Given our current complement of faculty this would not be fiscally responsible (III.1.a). This kind of model makes it much harder to provide for transfer entry (III.3.a.)

(This summary is based on the longer evaluation done of our current GURs plus Core II (see General Education website at plu.edu/~gened.)