

General Education at EIU

RESPONSIBLE GLOBAL CITIZENSHIP THROUGH MINDFUL SCHOLARSHIP

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General Education at Eastern Illinois University offers students an intellectual foundation for their future academic, professional, and personal lives. Mindful scholarship necessitates not only dedicated study but also reflection on the purposes and consequences of that study. By fostering serious and enthusiastic learning, Eastern Illinois University seeks to instill the value of intellectual curiosity and lifelong education in its students. Equipped with the values and traditions of scholarship, students will be better prepared to fulfill their duties as responsible citizens and capable leaders in a diverse world.

The mission of the General Education program at Eastern Illinois University is three-fold:

- to enhance student literacy and oral communication skills
- to encourage students to think critically and reflectively
- to introduce students to knowledge central to responsible global citizenship

Enhancing Literacy and Oral Communication

Mindful scholarship requires that students listen and read critically as well as write and speak clearly and effectively. Additionally, functioning in a global society requires an appreciation of communication within and among cultures through both the written and spoken word. Therefore, a foundation for further exploration within the general education curriculum, for study in one's major area, and for developing a successful career, requires both course work in and assessment of written and oral communication skills.

Critical and Reflective Thinking

Mindful scholars engage in a process of critical thinking learned through study in the traditional disciplines: physical and biological sciences, social and behavioral sciences, and humanities and fine arts. Developing analytical thinking skills and working in the modern world require knowledge of mathematics. Additionally, study in any of the sciences requires mathematical skills. Consequently, the general education program requires one course from a select group in that discipline.

In physical and biological science courses, students experience the rigor and practice of scientific inquiry through classroom and laboratory experiences. They learn to consider analytically the methods of describing, predicting, understanding, and explaining physical and biological phenomena. In these courses, students confront the social, economic, political, and ethical implications of science and technology as well as the dilemmas they create.

The social and behavioral sciences focus more directly on understanding society and the individual. In these courses, students will have the opportunity to apply various methods of inquiry and analysis, both quantitative and qualitative, to the study of the human condition. These sciences emphasize the importance of understanding the diversity of human cultures, their socio-historical context, and one's personal responsibility for being not only a good citizen, but also a steward of the environment.

The humanities provide sources and methods for reflection upon human experience in its historical, literary, philosophical, and religious dimensions. The basis of instruction in these disciplines is primarily the interpretation and critical analysis of written texts. The goal of humanities courses is to provide students with the foundations and methods necessary for a critical understanding of languages, cultures, and traditions, including those that are different from their own.

Courses in the fine arts provide students with a basis for understanding and evaluating musical, theatrical, and visual works in terms of their production and aesthetic reception. In these areas students learn to apply historical, philosophical, and critical concepts to specific works and genres. The goal of instruction in the fine arts is to provide students with the foundations and methods necessary for a critical appreciation of various artistic and aesthetic traditions, as well as the evaluation of particular musical, theatrical, or visual works.

In the general education program students explore the variety of ways of knowing through the disciplinary foundations of a liberal arts education. These courses help students become more mindful of the relationships among self, society, and the environment. Such preparation is vital as society becomes more complex, interdependent, and reflective of diversity. Collectively, the courses in general education encourage students to develop critical and reflective thinking as an intellectual habit.

Responsible Global Citizenship

The general education curriculum is also designed to develop and strengthen those attitudes and behaviors integral to responsible global citizenship—ethical behavior, civic participation, an understanding of history, and an appreciation of diversity both at home and abroad. Responsible citizens not only comprehend world-shaping forces and events and the varied experiences that have shaped human culture, but also use that understanding to make informed, objective, and ethical decisions. They understand their responsibility as educated members of society and actively participate in their communities. Finally, responsible global citizens appreciate the diversity of the world in which they work and live. As part of their general education program, all students are required to complete a course with a focus on cultural diversity.