Participation in University Studies General Education Requirements

2008-2009

Dear Colleagues:

The Offices of University Studies and the Dean of Arts & Sciences are now soliciting proposals for courses contributing to the Brandeis general education requirements. This year we are consolidating course calls from individual oversight committees into one call with the goal of streamlining the process and reducing the number of letters and e-mails sent to faculty.

First-year students entering in the fall of 2007 and thereafter must satisfactorily complete one University Seminar, one Non-Western and Comparative Studies course, one Quantitative Reasoning course, one Writing-Intensive course, and either a second Writing-Intensive course or an Oral Communication course, in addition to other writing, foreign language, and school distribution requirements.

Following are brief descriptions of each requirement and information about applying to join each program. Please view our updated webpages at www.brandeis.edu/ustudies for more extensive information regarding guidelines and forms. We welcome course applications and syllabi any time throughout the year but will also send an additional reminder in the spring.

Non-Western and Comparative Studies (NWC): The non-Western and Comparative Studies requirement (NW) is designed to encourage students to explore societies, cultures, and experiences beyond those of the Western tradition. The common goal of NWC courses is to acquaint students with world views, indigenous intellectual traditions, historical narratives, and social institutions that have developed largely outside European society and its North American transplants. By examining some particular culture, society, or region of the non-Western world (such as those of Africa, Asia, the Middle East, Latin America, and Oceania), or by systematically comparing a range of values and institutions across cultural boundaries, students broaden their understanding of human achievements and potentialities beyond the Western heritage. Through the study of non-Western societies in their original settings, students also gain a better understanding of minority groups and diasporic cultures (such as African-American, Latino, Asian, and Muslim) in the United States and the West in general.

If you are offering a course that meets the program's criteria and objectives, please send the course syllabus via e-mail to Lisa Mills (lmills@brandeis.edu).

Oral Communication (OC): The oral communication requirement aims to enhance students' ability to communicate and listen effectively in a range of contexts, to critically evaluate orally presented information and arguments, and to consider specific techniques for using language as a communication tool. Oral communication courses include at least two opportunities per course to
develop and practice oral communication skills through a wide range of possible assignments. Courses involve instruction on topics such as appropriate style and effective delivery, theories of effective communication and clarity of expression, ideas and voice; and assessment of students’ communication skills through feedback by instructor and classmates.

The Oral Communication Committee invites faculty to complete the syllabus cover sheet, available at http://www.brandeis.edu/ustudies/Bulletin%20OC.html, to propose courses for inclusion in the program. Please send this form and your course syllabus to Lisa Mills (lmills@brandeis.edu).

Quantitative Reasoning (QR): The quantitative reasoning requirement has been established to develop students’ abilities to collect, summarize, and analyze numerical data; to make abstract concepts operational; and to think critically about the accuracy and soundness of conclusions based on data or on mathematical models. Quantitative reasoning courses usually embed methodological training in their subject matter. These courses vary widely in the skills that are emphasized, but they usually include one or more of the following: a. learning to read, construct, interpret, and evaluate tables, graphs, and charts; b. developing quantitative measures of physical, behavioral, or social phenomena; c. using mathematical models to express causal relationships and to explore the implications of changed assumptions or proposed solutions to problems in the physical or social world; d. collecting and organizing numerical data from archives, surveys, lab experiments, or other sources; e. testing hypotheses using experimental or statistical controls; or f. assessing the limitations of research, such as the reliability and validity of measures, adequacy of experimental design, sample size and quality, and alternative hypotheses and interpretations.

If you are teaching a course that meets the program's objectives, please submit the course's syllabus and a brief statement describing how the course will teach quantitative reasoning skills to Lisa Mills (lmills@brandeis.edu). Please attach a list of "quantitative reasoning assignments" (your list could be incorporated into your syllabus - but provide enough specifics to allow the Committee to understand what your students will be asked to do).

University Seminar (USem): University Seminars (USem) are special courses specifically designed for first-year students and intended as a foundation for their studies at Brandeis. The primary objective is to provide an interactive small class environment where students, under the close guidance of faculty, can experience the intense intellectual engagement of a seminar with fellow students. The topics and texts of the courses are broad-ranging; such diversity allows students and faculty to focus on subjects in which they have a particular interest. Seminars incorporate multiple perspectives (disciplinary or interdisciplinary) in addressing significant issues, questions and problems.

These courses are also skill-oriented, facilitating the development of analytical and writing or oral communication skills. Seminar discussions, under faculty guidance, help students to formulate key questions and to construct a critical analysis of the author's or artist’s assumptions, evidence, and argumentation. In addition, they allow students to develop and share insights and
ideas, thus learning from each other. A USem may count toward Writing-Intensive, Oral Communication, Non-Western and Comparative Studies, Quantitative Reasoning, and/or school distribution requirements.

For further information, please contact the program administrator, Lisa Mills (lmills@brandeis.edu).

**Writing-Intensive (WI):** Writing-intensive courses involve frequent writing assignments (i.e., 18-20 pages, or 4500-5000 words), opportunities for rewriting based on instructor feedback, and some writing instruction. The writing can be a mix of formal and informal, including drafts, journals, response papers, and thesis-driven papers, and “revision” can include paper proposals, preliminary outlines, writing that count as drafts used in peer editing, or a paper's opening pages submitted for response.

For more information and a link to the WI application form, please click on [http://www.brandeis.edu/programs/writing/wi/FAQ.html](http://www.brandeis.edu/programs/writing/wi/FAQ.html) or write Dawn Skorczewski at dawnskor@brandeis.edu.

Thank you for your interest in the liberal arts education of our undergraduates. For further information, please feel free to write or call the chair or members of each of the program oversight committees. Their names are available at the University Studies website, [www.brandeis.edu/ustudies](http://www.brandeis.edu/ustudies).

Yours sincerely,

Adam B. Jaffe

Dean of Arts and Sciences