

## Proposal to Remove European Traditions *Category* from UCSB's General Education Requirements

by Prof. Harold Marcuse, History, revised May 13, 2021 [link to student petition, 5/17/21]

### Proposal:

To combine the UCSB General Education "European Traditions" Special Subject Area Requirement with the "World Cultures" Special Subject Area Requirement, retaining the name "World Cultures" for the combined category of courses.

### Suggested implementation guidelines:

- A. All courses currently approved as fulfilling "European Traditions" will be approved as fulfilling "World Cultures."
- B. The requirement's current "Objective" will be modified as follows:  
*"To learn to identify, understand, and appreciate the history, thought, and practices of two [different?] world cultures ~~outside of the European tradition.~~"*
- C. The 3 (EUR) plus 4 (WC) Learning Outcomes ([assessment link](#); [catalog link](#)) for these areas will be merged; courses currently approved as fulfilling this area shall meet at least 3 of these PLOs. Future reviews of courses in this area should ensure that they meet at least 4 of them. (These have been modified as shown to remove the Europe-specific references.)
  1. Identify origins, influences, and traditions of ~~European cultures and societies~~ one or more cultures and societies outside of the United States.
  2. Analyze interactions of ~~European cultures and societies with other cultures and societies~~ any culture and society in the world (outside the US) with any other culture and society (outside the US).
  3. Develop strategies for interpreting actions, artifacts, documents, and/or languages of ~~European cultures and societies~~ any world culture and society.
  4. Recognize how cultural patterns change and adapt over time.
  5. Explore questions about the roles that cultures play in shaping institutions, identities, and/or practices.
  6. Explore the methods used to investigate the study of cultures.
  7. Reflect critically on their own cultures through an understanding of the cultural experiences of others.
- D. This change shall be implemented as soon as possible.

**Goal:** In order to begin decolonizing UCSB's required General Education curriculum, this proposal seeks to remove the Special Subject Area "European Traditions" requirement by folding it into the "World Cultures" requirement. Instead of requiring one course from each of the two current categories, two courses would be required from this single combined category, ***so there would be no numerical change in the number of courses required.*** (Note: The BS, BFA and BM General Education requirements in the College of L&S already do not require any EUR courses. Thus the catalog text indicating that they do not require EUR can be deleted.)

**Justification:** The removal of this requirement from UCSB's general education curriculum brings us closer to current standards across the UC system (and at most comparison schools). Because of the broad diversity of approaches to "general education" (also known as "distribution" or "breadth" requirements) across campuses, it is difficult to compare them directly. However, a rough synoptic table with hyperlinks to the relevant catalog pages for UC campuses is included in the appended document. As the [Spring 2021 student petition](#) notes, no other UC campus has any remotely similar requirement focusing on Europe (or "the West").

***Some faculty have suggested that we go further in decolonizing and modernizing our GE curriculum. Since such changes would require lengthy consultation, we are not proposing them at this time, so we can focus on this most obvious, urgent and simple change. We encourage the Senate and Administration to undertake a reevaluation of our GE curriculum.***

**Background:** For decades—since at least 2002--many faculty members have judged UCSB's special emphasis on "Western Civilization" in its General Education requirements to be an indication of undesirable Eurocentrism in our curriculum. Although its complete removal was proposed at that time, only a renaming and reduction of the requirement was ultimately implemented in the 2005 GE reform. Euphemistically renamed "European Traditions," it was reduced from two courses from a highly restricted list, to one course from a much broader list of courses.<sup>1</sup> In early 2020, already prior to the heightened awareness of institutional White supremacy after the murders of Breonna Taylor and George Floyd, students were working on a petition to remove this requirement, which is submitted as a supporting document hereto. In the wake of those murders this University and a number of its departments have released pledges to combat anti-Blackness in our curriculum. This proposal is one obvious and simple way of reducing the White supremacy embedded in our curriculum.

**Impact on Students.** The effect on students will be minimal. Instead of having to choose one course from each of the two categories, they would be able to choose two courses from the combined list of courses, giving them greater flexibility (as noted above, this applies to BA students only). While some students might choose both courses from the EUR list, thereby circumventing the previous stipulation of a "non-European" culture, this is not necessarily a detriment: an in-depth exposure to the culture of one world region brings with it benefits as well, especially for students who already have a deeper grounding in a non-European culture. Also, students considering study abroad in Europe could benefit from increased knowledge of the culture of their target country. Note that in implementation guideline B, above, the word "different" could be inserted, to ensure that students could not take two courses from the same world region. For the reasons outlined here it is debatable whether this would be desirable.

**Enrollments.** To assess the possible impact on enrollments, Institutional Research has compiled five years of enrollment rates of all (and all lower division) courses on each list, with more detailed data

---

<sup>1</sup> A detailed documentation of the discussions of the "Western Civilization" requirement at UCSB from 1985 to 2004 can be found at: <http://ge.projects.history.ucsb.edu/WCivResponses022.htm>.

for the 7 departments offering courses listed in the pre-2005 GE subcategory E-1, "Western Civilization."<sup>2</sup> Since the enrollment rates in EUR and WC courses are roughly comparable (aggregate enrollments are sometimes higher in one, sometimes in the other), substantial shifts are unlikely. We would actually hope that some enrollment would shift to non-EUR World Cultures courses, since the main purpose of this proposal is to reduce our institutional privileging of "the West." The data broken down by major is more difficult to interpret, but is provided for each department to analyze.

**Resources.** If reviewers of this proposal wish to consult UCSB's current GE requirements, the following links go to the relevant catalog pages:

- Overall rationale for UCSB's GE program:  
<https://my.sa.ucsb.edu/catalog/Current/CollegesDepartments/Is-intro/GERequirements.aspx>.  
The links for each college and degree are at the bottom of the page.
- Descriptions of General Subject Areas C-G:  
<https://my.sa.ucsb.edu/catalog/Current/UndergraduateEducation/GeneralSubjectAreaRequirements.aspx>.
- Descriptions of the five Special Subject Areas:  
<https://my.sa.ucsb.edu/catalog/Current/UndergraduateEducation/SpecialSubjectAreaRequirements.aspx>.  
The fifth Special Requirement, "Ethnicity" is worded as follows:  
"Objective: To learn to identify and understand the philosophical, intellectual, historical, and/or cultural experiences of HISTORICALLY oppressed and excluded racial minorities in the United States."
- List of courses currently fulfilling the EUR requirement:  
<https://my.sa.ucsb.edu/catalog/Current/UndergraduateEducation/EurTradCourses.aspx>.

**Largest Survey Courses Designed to Fulfill the European Traditions Requirement:<sup>3</sup>**

ARTHI 6ABC - Art Survey: Ancient-Medieval; Renaissance-Baroque; Modern-Contemporary Art  
 CLASS 20AB and 40 - Ancient Greeks; Romans; Greek Mythology  
 C LIT 30ABC - Major Works in European Literature  
 FR 50ABCX / C LIT 50ABC - Tales of Love in the Western Tradition  
 HIST 4ABC - Ancient Mediterranean; Medieval and Early Modern Europe; Modern Europe  
 MUS 10ABC - History of Western Music from Early Modern Culture through Modernism  
 PHIL 20ABC - History of Philosophy  
 RG ST 80ABC - Religion and Western Civilization: Ancient; Medieval; Modern

The History Department, which removed "Western Civilization" from the title of its Hist 4ABC survey in 2018, unanimously endorsed a simpler version of this proposal. The other department chairs have been apprised of the proposal and were asked in mid-April to solicit feedback from their faculty. A joint discussion meeting is being scheduled for May 24, 2021.

<sup>2</sup> See the listing in the 2004-05 UCSB General Catalog, p. 114: [https://archive.org/details/cusb-ld781-s3\\_u55\\_2004-05/page/114/mode/2up](https://archive.org/details/cusb-ld781-s3_u55_2004-05/page/114/mode/2up). (MUS 10 was added in 2015-16, enrolling ca. 25-35 students quarterly. Historical enrollment data is available at <https://my.sa.ucsb.edu/public/CourseOfferingHistory.aspx>.) See the list of courses at the bottom of this page.

<sup>3</sup> <https://my.sa.ucsb.edu/catalog/Current/UndergraduateEducation/EurTradCourses.aspx>.

### Comparison of GE Requirements at UC Campuses (2020)

	UCSB <sup>4</sup>	Berkeley <sup>5</sup>	Davis <sup>6</sup>	Irvine <sup>7</sup>	Los Angeles <sup>8</sup>	Merced <sup>9</sup>	Riverside <sup>10</sup>	Santa Cruz <sup>11</sup>	San Diego <sup>12</sup>
<b># of courses</b>	13	7 (semester)	15 (52+35=77 units)	13	5-10	13 (semester)	14-15	11	14-16
<b># categories</b>	5	7	7	8	3	4+3+2=9	3	11	5
<b>Relevant or comparable special aspects</b>	European Traditions; World Cultures; [US] Ethnicity	none	American Cultures; Domestic Diversity; World Cultures	Multicultural Studies; International/ Global Issues	Diversity	Societies & Cultures of the Past; Diversity & Identity; Global Awareness	Ethnic Studies	none	none
<b>Humanities</b>	Culture & Thought	Historical Studies; Philosophy & Values	Arts & Humanities	Writing; Arts & Humanities	Literary and Cultural; Philosophical & Linguistic; Visual and Performance		Humanities		Humanities
<b>Social Sciences</b>	Social Science	International Studies; Social and Behavioral Sciences	Social Sciences	Social and Behavioral Sciences	Historical Analysis; Social Analysis	Social Science, Arts & Humanities	Social Sciences	Cross-Cultural Analysis; Ethnicity and Race	Social Science
<b>Natural Sciences</b>	Science, Math & Technology	Biological Science; Physical Science	Science & Engineering	Science and Technology	Life Sciences; Physical Sciences	Natural and Engineering Science	Natural Science/Math	Scientific Inq. Mathematical & Statistical Reasoning	Natural Science; Calculus
<b>Arts &amp; Literature</b>	Arts; Literature	Arts & Literature		Arts & Humanities				Arts and Media	

<sup>4</sup> <https://my.sa.ucsb.edu/catalog/Current/UndergraduateEducation/GEProgram.aspx>.

<sup>5</sup> <https://lsadvising.berkeley.edu/seven-course-breadth>

<sup>6</sup> <https://ucdavis.pubs.curricunet.com/Catalog/undergraduate-education#ge> (bookmark within page doesn't work, need to scroll down ca. 3/4 of the page)

<sup>7</sup> <http://catalogue.uci.edu/informationforadmittedstudents/requirementsforabachelorsdegree/#generaleducationrequirementtext>

<sup>8</sup> <https://www.registrar.ucla.edu/Academics/GE-Requirement>; <https://www.registrar.ucla.edu/Academics/GE-Requirement/Campuswide-GE-Requirements-Overview>.

<sup>9</sup> <https://catalog.ucmerced.edu/content.php?catoid=17&navoid=1644#ge>

<sup>10</sup> [https://chasstudentaffairs.ucr.edu/undeclared\\_program/program\\_overview/breadth.html](https://chasstudentaffairs.ucr.edu/undeclared_program/program_overview/breadth.html).

<sup>11</sup> <https://catalog.ucsc.edu/Current/General-Catalog/Undergraduate-Information/Undergraduate-Academic-Program/General-Education-Requirements>.

<sup>12</sup> <https://catalog.ucsd.edu/undergraduate/graduation-requirements/index.html>.