**HNRS 300 Contemporary Issues** rev July 2016

**Catalog description:** Asks students to look back on their experiences and their work in the Intellectual Inquiry Curriculum in order to make explicit, meaningful connections to contemporary issues. In addition to individual written assignments, students will work in small groups to research and develop a proposal concerning a concept, approach, or solution to a problem that will be presented in a formal defense. Course cap = 18

**Topics:** All HNRS courses must have a central organizing question. They must be inquiries. For HNRS 300, topics should be amenable to major group research projects.

The most challenging Honors requirement for recent proposers has been #16 engagement in a community beyond the classroom. When you are designing a new Honors course, please start with a topic and this requirement. Make them work together before you start putting in the content and all of the other requirements. Tacking a token engagement piece onto a largely completely conceived proposal will show, and GEC is likely to return the proposal to you for revision. No one wants that. Start with a topic and imagine community engagement first. Integrate it into your course, then the other stuff will follow. The Honors Director or Gen Ed Director would be happy to bounce around some ideas.

**Requirement Highlights**

Each HNRS 300 course will:

1. Require students to work in small groups to research and develop a proposal concerning a concept, approach, or solution to a problem that will be presented in a formal defense.
2. Pose a question or topic in such a way that students can draw on information and perspectives from all three divisions, encouraging research and creative application of facts to a contemporary problem so as to arrive at, propose, and defend a solution. Faculty should be deliberate in developing courses that allow students to draw from their previous work.
3. Include a number of intellectually rigorous readings, along with any other types of source materials relevant to the instructors’ disciplines.
4. Ask students to complete four kinds of tasks. The particular way these tasks are completed is up to the instructor:
   * Application of previous work to the course topic
   * Individual Writing
   * Group Assignment (may incorporate individual work)
   * Oral defense of group assignment.
5. Require Hacker’s *A Writer’s Reference*, Roanoke College custom edition
6. Include assignments and reading that are more challenging or more sophisticated than would be used in equivalent non-Honors courses
7. Require students to make connections between course content and personal, civic, or global issues.
8. Require students to engage with a community beyond the classroom. This engagement will be a significant course component, equivalent at a minimum to several hours of class time or a significant graded assignment

**Syllabus Checklist**

In addition to the elements above, the syllabus must include

1. Instructor's office location and office hours
2. Description of course content and teaching methods
3. The learning outcomes for HNRS 300 as listed below. Instructors may, if they wish, include additional learning outcomes beyond the common set or may include some additional comments about how the common learning outcomes are realized in this specific course.
4. Any materials that students are expected to buy, read, or use during the course
5. Classroom and attendance policies (with penalties explained)
6. Assignments students will be required to undertake
7. Grading policy (ideally a grading scale with penalties explained)
8. Testing policy, including make-up tests
9. RC's academic integrity policy as it applies to the class
10. An outline showing proposed topics, students' assignments, reading list, laboratory work, etc. to be required.
11. The focus of inquiry
12. Be sure that any boilerplate sections (e.g. related to tutoring or Writing Center) are up to date and appropriate for the course.

**Learning Outcomes for HNRS 300—**these must go on the syllabus. Instructors may add section-specific outcomes if desired.

1. Students will apply their research findings to a formal project addressing the course topic question and will successfully present this proposal in an oral defense.
2. Students will write well-organized and clearly reasoned papers both individually and with a group. Papers will have clear theses, effective organization, and a minimum of sentence-level errors.
3. Students will contribute to meaningful, effective discussion and collaborative work that includes expressing, listening to, and debating ideas.
4. Students will be able to apply critical thinking and quantitative reasoning skills in a meaningful way.
5. Students will make explicit, meaningful connections between past course work (both in the core and in their majors) and contemporary issues.
6. Students will demonstrate understanding of a contemporary issue or problem, an awareness of the types of inquiry needed to understand it, and the resources required for addressing it.
7. Students will connect course content to their lives and to communities beyond the classroom.

**Does your course meet the Global Requirement?**

You can request that GEC designate your course as meeting the Global requirement at the time you propose it or at a later date.

Each Global Perspective course must

1. Address at least one of the global learning outcomes:
   1. Analyze selected issues or events by applying cultural frames of reference or perspectives.
   2. Analyze selected issues or events in terms of global interconnections and interdependencies
2. Include global content from at least one country outside the United States, and
3. Devote at least 50% of course time or assignments to topics supporting the global focus. Global interconnections and interdependencies assume an anthropocentric context, i.e., focus on ways humans affect or are affected by such global interconnections and interdependencies.

Note that the 50% rule is in support of the global focus. This includes content needed to prepare students for the analyses we are asking them to apply. GEC does not expect courses to spend 50% of their time directly on one of the learning outcomes. Laboratory or similar course may count time or assignments from both lecture and lab. Laboratory courses that want to make a case based in course time rather than assignments need only reference 3 hrs/week. In other words, they don’t need twice as much global content to make up for the extra lab hours. Student time spent working outside of class, in service-learning, or other activities may also be cited in support of a global focus.

**Assessment Requirements:**TBA

**Additional Notes**

Instructors may teach courses singly or in collaboration with other faculty, using any form of collaborative teaching they deem appropriate. In both individual and group work, instructors will be deliberate in communicating their expectations for student writing and help students to meet those expectations. There should be ongoing attention to writing, including drafting and revising, organization, fundamentals of proper usage, and clarity of expression. After the first half of the semester, much of the instruction may take place in consultations with students, individually and in groups, as they develop their proposals and prepare for their defense.

**General Guidelines and Advice for Proposals**

**Proposal Components**

The course proposal has three components that the committees can review to determine whether the course is clearly addressing the required components and characteristics: syllabus, focus of inquiry statement, and course proposal form. Committee members can’t read your mind; be sure the required elements are clearly laid out in these places.

**Focus of Inquiry**: Not more than 150 words to describe the essence of your course and its inquiry. Students are the main audience, so write to draw them in. Faculty will also see this description in the faculty meeting agenda. This is a good place to describe the inquiry aspects of the course. Be careful not to include very specific information that could vary in later offerings since changes to this description have to be reported to CC.

**Syllabus**: In addition to all the regular stuff you put on a syllabus, this is where the committees look for information on the level and volume of readings, types of assignments, instruction on writing, timing of drafts, etc. Help the committee by giving more detail than “Paper 3.” Consider including a paragraph that describes the assignment. (E.g., “Paper 3 will be a research paper on x, in which you will do y and z. Topic approval is due by this date, the annotated bibliography by another date, and the first draft by third date.”)

**Proposal Form**: The questions on the proposal form try to focus on required elements, but also the most common concerns that the committee has had about proposals in past. Please try to answer the questions on the proposal form as directly as possible. Direct, specific answers need not be lengthy.

**Focus of Inquiry**Each course proposal should include a *focus of inquiry*, a statement of not more than 150 words that explains what focused questions the course addresses and how they are approached in the course structure. The focus of inquiry will be listed on the COL and should also appear on the course syllabus. Remember that students become the audience for this description in the COL. The course needs a focus; it should not be a survey.

In typical gen-ed courses of old, the content was the primary driver; the intellectual questioning wouldn’t be that obvious to the students. An HNRS course should make inquiry the primary driver. We should try to design courses where students are intrigued by the topics, stimulated by the questioning aspect and become interested in the content. The students’ intellectual curiosity is enhanced when they seek answers to the critical questions they’ve been posed or they ask of themselves.  The bottom line is that we want to challenge our students to become thinkers by posing theme/content based questions in a more deliberate way and provide them with useful tools to help them seek answers. Are some course features incompatible with inquiry? Not really, but courses that are emphasizing content delivery and where the classroom is instructor-centered rather than student-centered will need to work harder to develop inquiry features in other aspects of the course. All courses deliver content. Inquiry is a way of framing the course and its content. HNRS courses should not be surveys.

The inquiry nature of an HNRS course should also be evident in some aspects of the course’s structure, activities, or assignments. Questioning skills are promoted by deliberately framing the topic as an intellectually rigorous inquiry. Courses should make explicit attempts to explain to students why a particular investigation might be interesting or important. Many inquiry courses share features with scholarly inquiry. They go beyond merely exploring interesting topics to engage students in posing significant questions, seeking information, and proposing solutions. Other courses exhibit inquiry by emphasizing active roles for the students. In particular, a course may ask students to design experiments or choose topics to research. Many instructors choose to use questions to structure sections of a course and assignments. For example, the first third of a course might explore content related to a major question about the course topic. At the end of that section, students write papers where the theses propose answers to the question. While some may consider structuring a course around questions to be a mere mechanical device, it can be an easy way to keep inquiry visible to students. Questions that may seem mechanical to experts can be new and intriguing to students. Instructors should help students be aware of inquiry features in the course through aspects of the syllabus or assignments.

**Details of Course Schedule and Assignments**Instructors will be asked to describe how this course satisfies all the requirements, and especially how the course satisfies those requirements that distinguish between INQ and HNRS courses. How much detail of the course schedule and assignments does an instructor need to include in a course proposal? Enough to allow the members of GEG and CC to see that the course is meeting the requirements. The committees look at course schedules to see how much time is being spent on readings, how class time is being used, whether instruction in writing and oral communication is included, whether methodologies are being discussed, if sufficient time for drafting is allowed, and if sufficient time for oral presentations is allowed. Details of assignments can be very helpful to the committee especially in appreciating the use of inquiry or how drafting is being used. While few instructors will have fully detailed assignments sheets, providing some details of the assignment topic and focus helps the committees appreciate what the instructor is doing (with inquiry, methodologies, writing instruction, or other outcomes) and can help avoid a round of clarifying questions.

**HNRS 300 Group Work and Problems**  
HNRS 300 requires students to work in groups to address problems related to contemporary issues. Much of the instructor’s work is related to managing student work rather than directly controlling content. Course proposals should describe how students will be prepared for major group work and how class meetings will be structured so that it is clear that instructors have thought through these issues. Instructors should describe the readings and activities that will prepare students for their projects. They should address how they will help students generate critical questions that must be addressed in each project, and how they will help each student determine what prior knowledge and skills they bring to bear on the project. Policies related to the projects, intermediate deadlines, grading of group work, and similar issues should be described. Examples of possible group projects/questions should be included.

HNRS 300 instructors are strongly urged to work with an instructional librarian. Piper Cumbo or one of the other librarians can provide suggestions related to research strategies, meet with classes or groups of students, do a first review of student bibliographies, or provide similar services as long as the instructor makes arrangements before the term starts. Consultation with a librarian can also be very helpful while working on a course proposal.