

Diverse and Global Communities  
Committee Report

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**Rationale:** *General Education should cultivate the skills and knowledge that enable graduates to make effective decisions as citizens of a rapidly changing, richly diverse, and increasingly interconnected world. University of Mary Washington students will graduate into a world marked by transnational corporations and global financial transactions; international migration; complex political relations amongst nation-states; individualized, yet global communication systems; and a host of health and environmental issues that do not respect political boundaries. As a foundation for democratic citizenship and visionary leadership in an increasingly diverse and global society, University of Mary Washington graduates will need a framework for informed reflection on human diversity and social complexity. The dilemmas and possibilities humankind faces cannot be effectively addressed by any single culture or group of people acting alone. The focus of this requirement is understanding the interconnections that differently affect people living in different places. The requirement also seeks to help our students understand how effective and appropriate interaction with a variety of people and different cultural contexts might address those complex problems.*

*Courses that focus primarily on the U.S. can be applicable as long as the learning outcomes are met through discussion of diverse cultures, interactions, and practices and some engagement with the world beyond our borders. An approved study abroad or other field program can fulfill this requirement if it includes a satisfactory evaluation of a written reflection of a student's experience in that program by a University of Mary Washington faculty member. A Community Engagement course that includes the "diversity and inclusion" learning outcome fulfills this requirement.*

**Student Learning Outcomes:**

**Courses will meet at least 3 of the 4 outcomes.**

**Explanation:** Courses under this category may cover issues related to *both* diversity *and* global issues but some courses may focus more so on one or the other, so we wrote some of the outcomes to be more centrally about the global side, and some of the outcomes to be more centrally about the diversity side. A course in this category which primarily addresses diversity is appropriate; a course which primarily addresses global issues would be appropriate. We do think it is possible for many courses to be both, so if your course

fulfills all four, please by all means say so and address all four learning outcomes, because it would be valuable to have as many as possible do both.

**SLO1: Students will develop an informed understanding of an issue or a group of related issues (e.g., economic, environmental, geographical, health-related, historical, linguistic, political, technological) that influences cultures, global systems, and/or societies.**

More simply put, this SLO focuses on the elements of the course that are more explicitly global in nature.

**Issue:** your course need not be limited to something on this list. The list includes potential examples of issues that might be topics in your course. Courses need not address specific elements of contemporary societies. Courses can address one or any number of elements from the natural or social world.

**Societies/cultures/global systems:** This terminology is meant to be inclusive of a variety of ways of thinking about organizing social interaction and social structures, and all courses are not required to discuss each of these or use each set of terms. We also do not see these as interchangeable concepts. We understand that the words “society,” “culture” and “global system” are not uncomplicated terms and will mean different things across different disciplines. We felt it was important to include “culture(s)” as elements within a society as a crucial way of including courses focused more on diversity among various cultures or subcultures even in a given society.

Two cultures could be contemporary US culture and cultures of the US past.

**SLO2: Students will explore any of a range of topics including age, disability, ethnicity, gender, language, nationality, race, religion, sexuality, socioeconomic status, veteran status, and/or other salient social statuses that influence the human condition.**

More simply put, this SLO focuses on the elements of the course that are more explicitly about diversity issues.

**Topics:** The “and/or” and last clause here indicates a flexible read of these statuses or categorizations to allow for broad range of disciplines/courses. All of these items, or even a large number of them, do not need to be covered. We also recognize these terms are socially constructed and bounded by time and place, and may be used differently in one applicant’s course or discipline than another’s.

Similarly, the same concepts used in a historical or pre-modern context may have different terminology. An understanding of intersectionality (i.e. the interconnectedness of social identities and their compounding relationships to discrimination) is encouraged. Courses may also challenge students to explore the very nature of any examined status category (for example, to understand the reasons that a social category such as “race” exists and why its uses and definitions might be fraught).

Courses whose primary focus is a global issues topic (as noted in SLO 1) but also include an understanding of social status(es) listed here even though these are not the primary focus of the class could include this SLO.

**SLO3: Students will be able to articulate how complex natural and/or human systems are influenced and/or constructed, operate with differential consequences, and can be altered. Students will reflect upon their own relationship to these processes.**

More simply put, this SLO evaluates the impact of one’s own and others’ actions on the natural or human world.

**Natural or human systems:** What we meant by including both of these was that the course does not have to be solely a social science course.

**Are influenced and/or constructed:** of course the “by whom” or “by what” is left out as well as not terrific grammar, but it was written this way so as to allow flexibility by discipline in terms of what is doing the influencing or constructing (political structures, privilege, etc.)

**Operate with differential consequences:** again, the vagueness is there to allow flexibility by discipline in terms of what differential consequences mean and why they are important, as well as how they might be altered (or even if that’s even a desirability). What are the forces and processes that shape societies and/or global systems (in light of the topic of the course)? Some course may choose to address the effects of power, privilege or oppression, or creating a just society. Each discipline or instructor may have a different idea and should operate from the premise that understanding this may be part of the course’s content.

**Reflect:** this reflection should lead the student to evaluate the impact of one’s own and others’ actions on the natural and human world, either globally or on a smaller scale. This reflection may include how the course material relates to them, how they feel about it, whether the course material is challenging or changing the way they think about the material. Students may, e.g., identify potential conflicts, think about how one might benefit from systems that oppress others, or confront the marginalization of a group.

**SLO4: Students will reflect on how knowledge of these global or intercultural connections and/or consideration of diverse perspectives can help explain conflict and establish respect for other cultures and/or societies.**

**Reflect:** This reflection moves beyond understanding and reflecting on processes to help students understand societies and contexts quite different from their own and learn the potential benefits of doing so. One can articulate one's identity in a diverse and/or global context. Look at role of intercultural understanding in assessing problems. Take seriously the perspectives of others. For some this may mean working toward tolerance. For some courses the goal may be different from mere tolerance to include "inclusion," "humility," "compassion," "understanding."

**Culture / Society** – see above.