



# expand your horizons

GENERAL EDUCATION PROGRAM

**2009–2010**



AMERICAN UNIVERSITY  
WASHINGTON, DC

# ABOUT THE GENERAL EDUCATION PROGRAM

## Program Goals

- competence in written and oral communication
- critical thinking, including information literacy
- ethical awareness
- aesthetic sensibility
- diverse perspectives, including race, class, culture, gender, and academic discipline
- a global point of view

Welcome to AU's General Education Program. With this booklet, we aim to describe the program, how it works, and why we think it will be a valuable part of your education. We'll also provide information about the courses being offered and a sense of how those courses relate to one another. That's one of the distinctive features of our program: not only do we offer you a menu of high-quality courses from which to choose, but we also ensure that those courses relate to one another in ways that produce an integrated learning experience.

AU's General Education Program consists of 150 courses arranged into five curricular areas. These curricular areas represent the best efforts of numerous scholars to divide human knowledge and intellectual activity into manageable pieces: the creative arts, traditions that shape the Western world, global and multicultural perspectives, social institutions and behavior, and the natural sciences. All of the curricular areas contain puzzles and challenges that we feel all educated people should grapple with on their way to developing a firm and mature sense of themselves.

In the end, this is what general education is all about: helping you to find yourself by engaging in dialogue with great scholars, artists, poets, and philosophers. The General Education Program allows you to test your ideas against theirs and grapple

with tricky ethical and political issues in the company of your classmates and under the guidance of a teacher whose main goal is to produce a space in which real learning can take place. You may discover a hidden aptitude for, or a love of, a subject area that you'd never considered before or learn to appreciate an area of human knowledge that you'd previously thought irrelevant. And through it all, you'll be finding out who you are.

The philosopher Friedrich Nietzsche once wrote that you should "become who you are." This strikes us as a neat, concise definition of what we are about in the General Education Program. To us, Nietzsche's admonition means both that you should find out who you are already and that you should become more intentional about crafting yourself along those lines, so that your decisions and actions reflect the person you most want to be. It is our feeling that the best way for you to learn how to do this is to engage in a deliberate effort to work through the implications of various positions, trying things out and seeing how they fit together. That's our overarching goal: to provide you with a solid foundation on which to build your career and, ultimately, your life as a generally educated person.



## Guidelines for Completing the Program

**General Education courses are grouped into five curricular areas:**

**Area 1:** The Creative Arts

**Area 2:** Traditions That Shape the Western World

**Area 3:** Global and Multicultural Perspectives

**Area 4:** Social Institutions and Behavior

**Area 5:** The Natural Sciences

Each curricular area offers a choice between two course clusters that include several foundation courses and a larger number of second-level courses. You choose two courses in each curricular area—one foundation course and one second-level course in the same cluster (6 credit hours in areas 1, 2, 3, and 4 and 7 credit hours in area 5). General Education foundation courses differ from traditional survey courses by integrating perspectives and skills essential to a complete education.

**To successfully complete the program, you will need to follow these guidelines:**

- Select two courses from one of the two clusters in a curricular area, a foundation course followed by a more specialized second-level course.
- Register for your selected courses in sequence, the foundation first followed by the second-level in a subsequent semester.
- Do not take more than two courses in any one discipline. A discipline is defined by the subject designator in the course number, such as "HIST" or "ANTH."
- Do not count courses that fulfill the college writing or university mathematics requirements in the two-course limit for a discipline.
- If you have placed at or below Finite Mathematics, be sure to satisfy the university mathematics requirement before enrolling in a foundation course in curricular area 5, the Natural Sciences.
- Pass courses with a grade of D or higher to gain General Education credit, or opt to take the course for a pass/fail grade—but note that courses taken for major or minor credit in addition to General Education credit might require different grade standards.
- Once registered at American University, take all your General Education courses here. After that point, you may not transfer courses from another institution or substitute any courses outside the program.

CURRICULAR AREA

1

## LEARNING OBJECTIVES

- examine the nature of creativity, especially imaginative and intuitive thinking
- situate creative works, and judgments about those creative works, in their appropriate social and historical context
- develop your own creative and expressive abilities, so that you can better understand the qualities that shape an artist's work

# The Creative Arts

The creative arts celebrate the human capacity to imagine, to create, and to transform ideas into expressive forms, such as paintings, poems, and symphonies. The arts provide us with a rich record of human cultures and values throughout time. They enable us to understand and enjoy the experiences of our senses and to sharpen our aesthetic sense—that human quality through which we comprehend beauty. To appreciate the relationship between form and meaning is to realize that the creative arts, regardless of their medium of expression, share important principles.

Courses in this curricular area have varied emphases: the process of creativity, the analysis of the artistic imagination, or the relationship between artists, their works, and the societies in which their works are produced. You may choose a hands-on experience and paint, draw, design, or write. Alternatively, you may study both classic and recent works of literature, art, music, dance, or theatre. All courses in this area challenge you to understand creativity and the distinctive intellectual process of the human imagination.



## CURRICULAR AREA 1 COURSES

### Cluster 1: Understanding Creative Processes

#### FOUNDATION COURSES

- ARTS-100** Art: The Studio Experience
- LIT-105** The Literary Imagination
- PERF-110** Understanding Music
- PERF-115** Theatre: Principles, Plays, and Performance

#### SECOND-LEVEL COURSES

- ARTS-205** The Artist's Perspective: Drawing
- ARTS-210** The Artist's Perspective: Painting
- ARTS-215** The Artist's Perspective: Sculpture
- ARTS-235** The Artist's Perspective: Multimedia
- LIT-215** Writers in Print/in Person
- PERF-200** Dance and Society
- PERF-205** Masterpieces of Music
- PERF-210** Greatness in Music
- PERF-225** The African American Experience in the Performing Arts

#### WILD-CARD COURSES

*(Consult the Schedule of Classes for specific listings. Topics change every semester.)*

- GNED-210** Selected Topics in General Education

### Cluster 2: Understanding Creative Works

#### FOUNDATION COURSES

- ARTH-105** Art: The Historical Experience
- COMM-105** Visual Literacy
- LIT-120** Interpreting Literature
- LIT-135** Critical Approach to the Cinema

#### SECOND-LEVEL COURSES

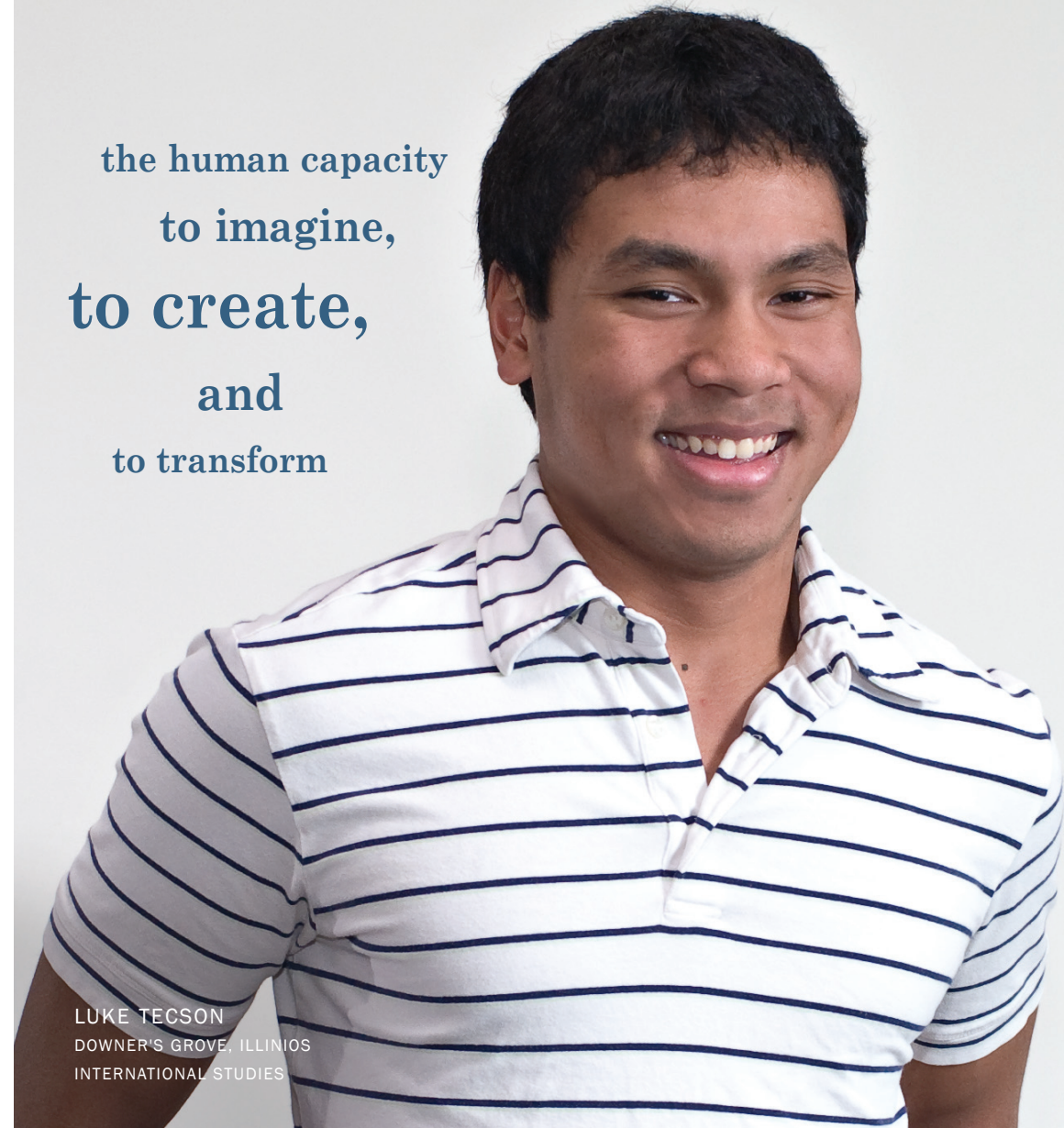
- ANTH-225** Language and Human Experience
- ARTH-210** Modern Art: Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries
- GDES-230** Graphic Design History: Visual Culture, Commerce and Propaganda
- LIT-225** The African Writer
- LIT-245** The Experience of Poetry
- LIT-270** Transformations of Shakespeare
- PERF-215** Opera on Stage and Film
- PERF-220** Reflections of American Society on Stage and Screen
- PHIL-230** Meaning and Purpose in the Arts

#### WILD-CARD COURSES

*(Consult the Schedule of Classes for specific listings. Topics change every semester.)*

- GNED-210** Selected Topics in General Education

the human capacity  
to imagine,  
to create,  
and  
to transform



LUKE TECSON  
DOWNER'S GROVE, ILLINOIS  
INTERNATIONAL STUDIES



CURRICULAR AREA

2

## LEARNING OBJECTIVES

- explore the diverse historical and philosophical traditions that have shaped the contemporary Western world
- read and discuss fundamental texts from those traditions, situating the texts in their appropriate intellectual contexts
- develop your ability to critically and comparatively reflect on religious and philosophical issues, in dialogue with others both past and present

# Traditions That Shape the Western World

The rich traditions that shape the Western world convey ideas, visions, and cultural practices that are shared, lasting, and tenacious. Whether prevailing values that many people of Western countries share or the folk traditions that grow out of small communities, these deeply rooted phenomena help us make choices about identity and affinity with family, community, history, values, and place.

Some courses in this curricular area examine powerful visions that philosophers, political theorists, historians, religious thinkers, scientists, and social critics have of the Western experience. Others explore competing ideas about human nature, liberty and

equality, and the consequences of social change. Finally, some uncover those traditions growing out of the unique experiences of women, ethnic groups, and indigenous peoples as they express and preserve their own principles of social organization and cultural expression.

All courses in this area emphasize chronology and share a close attention both to the substance of the past and the ways to study it. Through direct engagement with primary texts, you learn to ask questions, debate ideas, and come to understand the ways that we experience the events and ideas of the past in our own lives.

## CURRICULAR AREA 2 COURSES

### Cluster 1: Cultures of the West

#### FOUNDATION COURSES

- HIST-100** Historians and the Living Past
- HIST-110** Renaissance and Revolutions: Europe, 1400–1815
- LIT-125** Great Books That Shaped the Western World
- WGST-150** Women's Voices through Time

#### SECOND-LEVEL COURSES

- ANTH-235** Early America: The Buried Past
- ARTH-205** Art of the Renaissance
- HIST-205** American Encounters: 1492–1865
- HIST-215** Social Forces That Shaped America
- JWST-205** Ancient and Medieval Jewish Civilization
- JWST-210** Voices of Modern Jewish Literature
- LIT-235** African American Literature
- LIT-240** Asian American Literature
- LIT-265** Literature and Society in Victorian England

#### WILD-CARD COURSES

*(Consult the Schedule of Classes for specific listings. Topics change every semester.)*

- GNED-220** Selected Topics in General Education

### Cluster 2: Western Heritage and Institutions

#### FOUNDATION COURSES

- GOVT-105** Individual Freedom vs. Authority
- HIST-115** Work and Community
- JLS-110** Western Legal Tradition
- PHIL-105** Western Philosophy
- RELG-105** The Religious Heritage of the West

#### SECOND-LEVEL COURSES

- COMM-270** How the News Media Shape History
- HIST-235** The West in Crisis, 1900–1945
- JLS-225** American Legal Culture
- LFS-230** The Modernist Explosion: Culture and Ideology in Europe
- PHIL-220** Moral Philosophy
- PHIL-235** Theories of Democracy and Human Rights
- PHYS-230** Changing Views of the Universe
- RELG-220** Religious Thought
- SOCY-215** The Rise of Critical Social Thought

#### WILD-CARD COURSES

*(Consult the Schedule of Classes for specific listings. Topics change every semester.)*

- GNED-220** Selected Topics in General Education

human nature,

liberty and equality,

and

the consequences of

social change



AMANDA SILVA  
STATEN ISLAND, NEW YORK  
LITERATURE



CURRICULAR AREA

3

## LEARNING OBJECTIVES

- explore those habits of thought and feeling that distinguish regions, countries, and cultures from one another
- discuss, in comparative and cross-cultural perspective, the concepts, patterns, and trends that characterize contemporary global politics
- develop your capacity to critically analyze major issues in international and intercultural relations, especially how categories of difference are organized within and across cultures and how they affect political systems

# Global and Multicultural Perspectives

Global interdependence is a powerful fact. Through an exploration of societies in Asia, Africa, the Middle East, Latin America, and Europe, this curricular area opens the doors into varied cultures and issues that challenge a parochial understanding of the world.

You may select courses that focus on the major issues of contemporary world politics, including management of conflict, economic competition, and environmental threats to the quality of life. Other courses emphasize either a comparative or cross-cultural examination of societies, polities, and belief systems and acknowledge the importance of recognizing and overcoming cultural barriers.

Finally, some courses focus on the dilemma of the global majority—the three-quarters of the world's population who live in countries striving for national identity as well as economic and political development.

All courses in this area encourage a better understanding of the dimensions of experience and belief that distinguish cultures and countries from one another and, conversely, the commonalities that bind human experience together. The courses stimulate awareness of the need for enhanced international and intercultural communication.

## CURRICULAR AREA 3 COURSES

### Cluster 1: Global Perspective

#### FOUNDATION COURSES

- ECON-110** The Global Majority
- GOVT-130** Comparative Politics
- HIST-120** Imperialism and Revolution
- SIS-105** World Politics
- SIS-110** Beyond Sovereignty

#### SECOND-LEVEL COURSES

- COMM-280** Contemporary Media in a Global Society
- EDU-285** Education for International Development
- GOVT-235** Dynamics of Political Change
- HIST-225** Russia and the Origins of Contemporary Eurasia
- IBUS-200** The Global Marketplace
- LFS-200** Russia and the United States
- SIS-215** Competition in an Interdependent World
- SIS-220** Confronting Our Differences/ Discovering Our Similarities: Conflict Resolution
- SIS-255** China, Japan, and the United States
- SOCY-225** Contemporary Arab World

#### WILD-CARD COURSES

*(Consult the Schedule of Classes for specific listings. Topics change every semester.)*

- GNED-230** Selected Topics in General Education

### Cluster 2: Multicultural Experience

#### FOUNDATION COURSES

- ANTH-110** Culture: The Human Mirror
- LIT-150** Third-World Literature
- RELG-185** Forms of the Sacred: Religions of the East
- SIS-140** Cross-Cultural Communication
- SOCY-110** Views from the Third World

#### SECOND-LEVEL COURSES

- ANTH-210** Roots of Racism and Interracial Harmony
- ANTH-215** Sex, Gender, and Culture
- ANTH-220** Living in Multicultural Societies
- ANTH-230** India: Its Living Traditions
- HIST-250** Civilization and Modernization: Asia
- LFS-210** Latin America: History, Art, Literature
- RELG-210** Non-Western Religious Traditions
- SIS-210** Human Geography: Peoples, Places, and Cultures
- SIS-245** The World of Islam
- SIS-250** Civilizations of Africa
- SOCY-235** Women in the Third World

#### WILD-CARD COURSES

*(Consult the Schedule of Classes for specific listings. Topics change every semester.)*

- GNED-230** Selected Topics in General Education

varied cultures  
that challenge  
a parochial  
understanding  
of the  
world



ANA ALVAREZ  
WINTER PARK, FLORIDA  
BUSINESS ADMINISTRATION



CURRICULAR AREA

4

## LEARNING OBJECTIVES

- study the institutions, systems, and patterns of governance and of economic and social organization that underlie contemporary societies
- place policy options and their consequences in their appropriate social and political context, drawing on classic and contemporary theories of human organization
- develop your capacity to critically reflect on the organization of societies and the relationship between the individual and the society, using the distinctive methods of inquiry appropriate to the study of social institutions

# Social Institutions and Behavior

Studying the foundations of contemporary American society reveals the elements of complex social systems, the way individuals function in varied social settings, and the root causes of social behavior. In comprehending the mechanisms and rules that give shape to complex societies, we gain strength to influence institutional processes. Through reflection on principles that explain human behavior, we create understanding of our interpersonal experiences.

Courses in this curricular area are of several kinds: those that use one of the traditional social science disciplines to provide an overview of the interaction of individuals and the institutions that

shape our economic, political, and social experience; those that focus on a single institution and the complex ways in which it affects our lives; and those that use a societal dilemma as the entry point for discovering the ways in which the quality of individual life is protected or challenged in various settings.

The many and distinct disciplines that contribute to this area are united by a self-conscious dedication to the modes of inquiry of contemporary social science, as applied to the American experience. As strongly as it emphasizes the substance of knowledge, this curricular area emphasizes how we create knowledge and arrive at understanding.

## CURRICULAR AREA 4 COURSES

### Cluster 1: Institutions

#### FOUNDATION COURSES

COMM-100	Understanding Media
ECON-100	Macroeconomics
GOVT-110	Politics in the United States
SOCY-150	Global Sociology

#### SECOND-LEVEL COURSES

AMST-240	Poverty and Culture
COMM-275	Dissident Media: Voices from the Underground
ECON-200	Microeconomics
FIN-200	Personal Finance and Financial Institutions
GOVT-210	Political Power and American Public Policy
GOVT-215	Civil Rights and Liberties
PHIL-240	Ethics in the Professions
SOCY-210	Inequality: Class, Race, Ethnicity
WGST-225	Gender, Politics, and Power

#### WILD-CARD COURSES

*(Consult the Schedule of Classes for specific listings. Topics change every semester.)*

GNE-240	Selected Topics in General Education
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### Cluster 2: Social Behavior

#### FOUNDATION COURSES

ANTH-150	Anthropology of American Life
PSYC-105	Psychology: Understanding Human Behavior
SOCY-100	American Society
WGST-125	Gender in Society

#### SECOND-LEVEL COURSES

EDU-205	Schools and Society
HFIT-245	Gender, Culture, and Health
HIST-210	Ethnicity in America
HIST-220	Women in America
IDIS-210	Contemporary Multi-ethnic Voices
JLS-200	Deprivation of Liberty
JLS-215	Violence and Institutions
JLS-245	Cities and Crime
PSYC-205	Social Psychology
PSYC-215	Abnormal Psychology and Society
PSYC-235	Theories of Personality
SOCY-205	The Family

#### WILD-CARD COURSES

*(Consult the Schedule of Classes for specific listings. Topics change every semester.)*

GNE-240	Selected Topics in General Education
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mechanisms  
and rules  
that give shape to  
complex  
societies



BERCEM YEMAN  
BAKU, AZERBAIJAN  
BIOLOGY

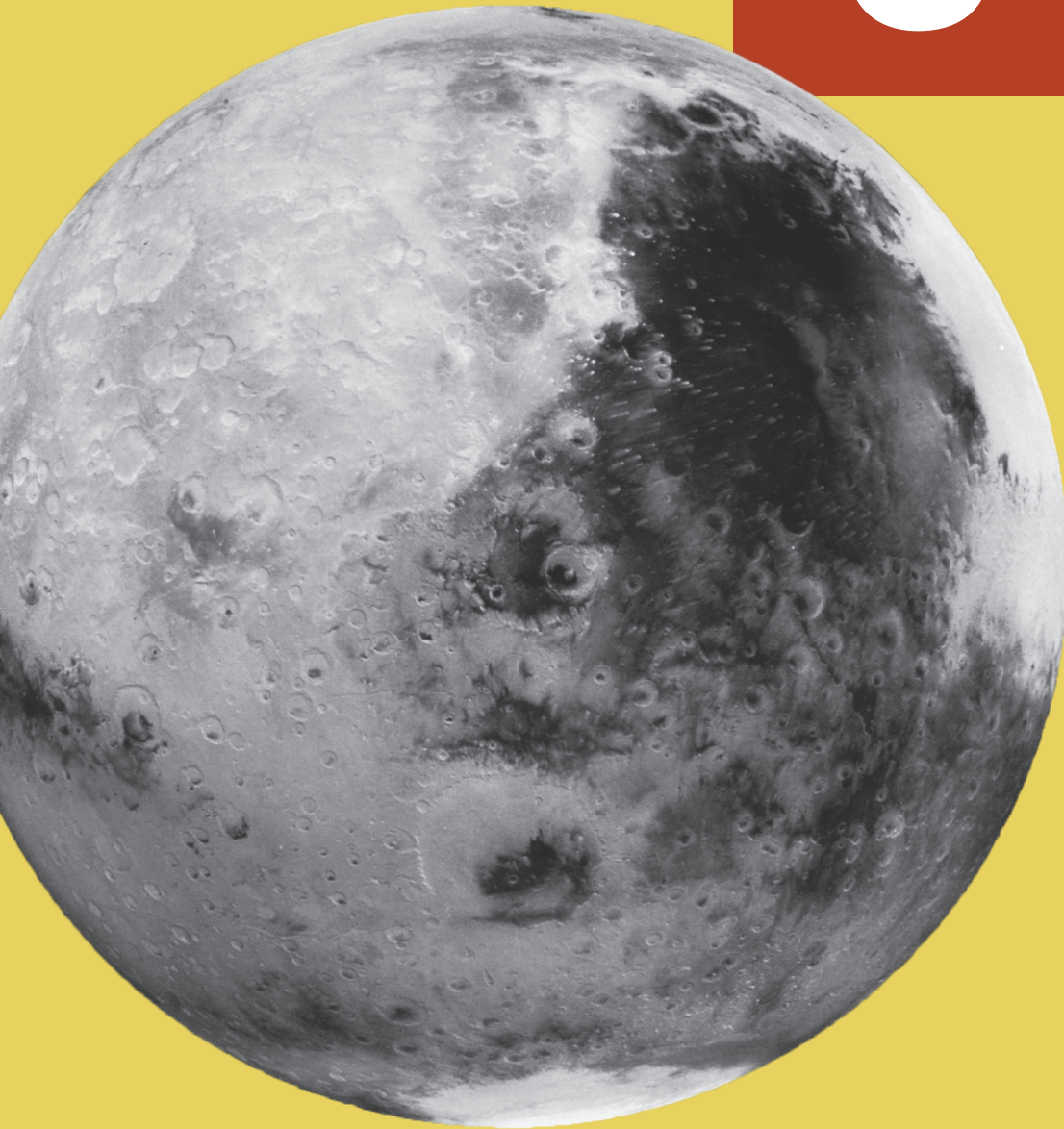


CURRICULAR AREA

5

## LEARNING OBJECTIVES

- investigate the natural world and the living forms that inhabit it by studying the systems and processes that occur at scales from the atomic to the cosmic
- develop problem-solving skills and utilize the scientific method to describe, explain, and predict natural phenomena through laboratory experiences
- analyze the role of science in public discourse and in addressing societal problems



# The Natural Sciences

Through observation and analysis of the physical and biological world, scientists discern basic principles that explain natural phenomena and unravel many mysteries. Whether chemist, biologist, physicist, or experimental psychologist, scientists rely on theory and experimentation to test and refine understanding of our bodies, our complex environment, and the universe.

All courses in this curricular area focus on the nature of scientific reasoning, discovery, and invention through systematically exploring basic concepts within their historical context. Foundation courses unite hands-on scientific experimentation, inductive reasoning, and deductive

analysis with the study of such basic principles as the structure of matter, biological evolution, human behavior, and thermodynamics. The second-level courses include both traditional advanced study in each discipline as well as integrative courses, such as oceanography, earth sciences, astronomy, and human biochemistry and health. This curricular area conveys a respect for the natural world, extends scientific literacy, and refines the modes of thought that characterize scientific inquiry.



## CURRICULAR AREA 5 COURSES

### Cluster 1: The Living World

#### FOUNDATION COURSES

- BIO-100 Great Experiments in Biology  
BIO-110 General Biology I  
PSYC-115 Psychology as a Natural Science

#### SECOND-LEVEL COURSES

- ANTH-250 Human Origins  
BIO-200 Structure and Function of the Human Body  
BIO-210 General Biology II  
BIO-220 The Case for Evolution  
CHEM-205 The Human Genome  
ENVS-240 Oceanography  
ENVS-250 Living in the Environment  
PSYC-200 Behavior Principles  
PSYC-220 The Senses  
PSYC-240 Drugs and Behavior

#### WILD-CARD COURSES

*(Consult the Schedule of Classes for specific listings. Topics change every semester.)*

- GNE-250 Selected Topics in General Education

### Cluster 2: The Physical World

#### FOUNDATION COURSES

- CHEM-100 The Molecular World  
CHEM-110 General Chemistry I  
PHYS-100 Physics for the Modern World  
PHYS-105 College Physics I  
PHYS-110 University Physics I

#### SECOND-LEVEL COURSES

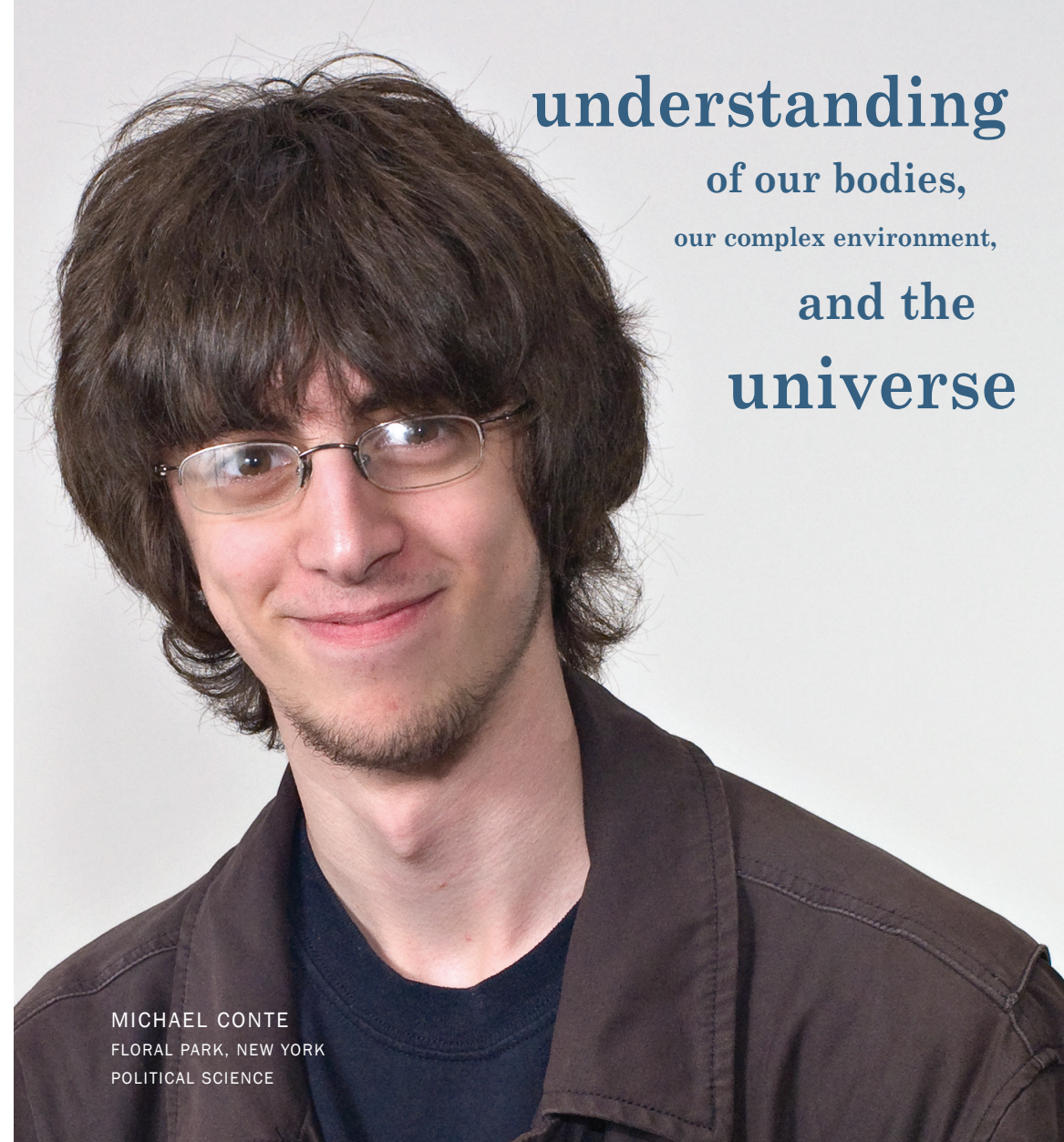
- CHEM-205 The Human Genome  
CHEM-210 General Chemistry II  
CHEM-220 Environmental Resources and Energy  
CHEM-230 Earth Sciences  
CHEM-250 Criminalistics: Crime and Society  
ENVS-240 Oceanography  
HFIT-205 Current Concepts in Nutrition  
PHYS-200 Physics for the New Millennium  
PHYS-205 College Physics II  
PHYS-210 University Physics II  
PHYS-220 Astronomy

#### WILD-CARD COURSES

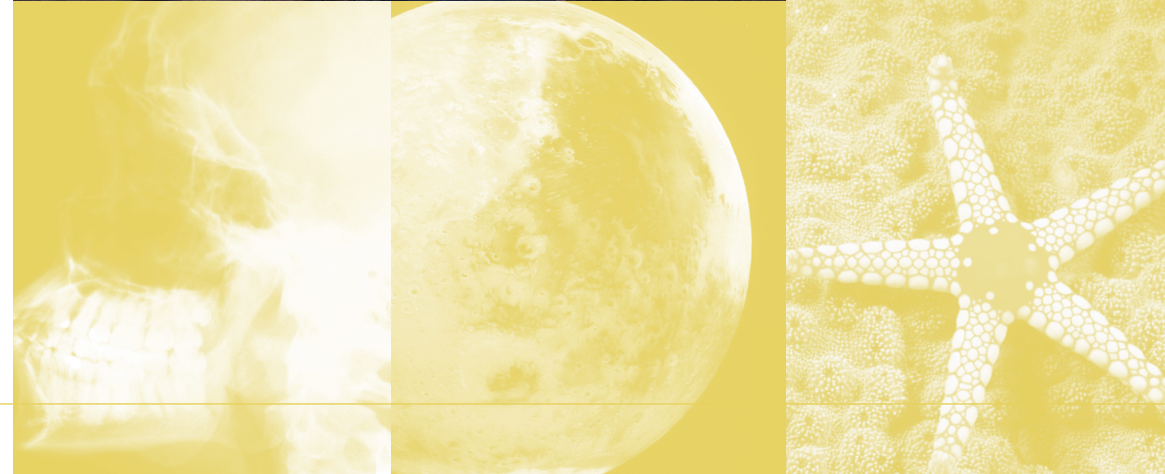
*(Consult the Schedule of Classes for specific listings. Topics change every semester.)*

- GNE-250 Selected Topics in General Education

understanding  
of our bodies,  
our complex environment,  
and the  
universe



MICHAEL CONTE  
FLORAL PARK, NEW YORK  
POLITICAL SCIENCE



## Frequently Asked Questions

### Who must take General Education courses at American University?

All AU undergraduate students, regardless of major or program, must fulfill the General Education Program requirements prior to graduation. This has been the case since the implementation of the General Education Program in 1989.

### How many General Education courses must I take?

You must take two courses in each of the five curricular areas (for a total of ten courses and 31 credit hours). First you take a foundation course and then follow it with a second-level course that appears in the same cluster. This sequencing is essential to the concept of the program, as each second-level course links in content to a particular foundation course. Consult the *Schedule of Classes*, the *University Catalog*, or the *Freshman Guide to Academic Programs and Registration* for a complete listing of course clusters.

### May I take a second-level General Education course first?

Sorry, no. If you are taking the courses for General Education credit, the foundation course serves as a prerequisite for the second-level course. So if you take a second-level course before the foundation course, or take the two concurrently, you will not receive General Education credit for the pair, even if they are in the same cluster. However, if you take the courses for any other purpose, you may take them in any sequence as long as routine prerequisites are met.

### What if the course section I want to take is closed?

It happens sometimes! Almost all courses are offered at least once a year, so wait until the next semester and see if the course

fits into your schedule. Many courses, especially foundation courses, are offered in multiple sections. Perhaps a different course will be compatible with your current semester schedule. Remember, if you choose an alternative second-level course, be sure it's in the cluster of the foundation course you've taken. Your academic advisor and the General Education office can help you locate an available section, but we cannot override carefully planned enrollment limits in course sections.

### Is there a limit on the number of courses I can take in a single academic discipline?

Yes. The idea is a *general* education. Although some academic departments have courses in several curricular areas, you may not take more than two General Education courses in a discipline. For example, you may take only two sociology courses (with the course designator beginning with "SOCY") out of your ten General Education courses. Look at the course designator to determine the academic discipline.

### What is the minimum grade that merits General Education credit in a course?

You must earn a D or better to get General Education credit for a course. You may also elect to take a General Education class on a pass/fail basis. However, if you are taking a General Education class to fulfill major or minor requirements, a D or a pass/fail grade might not be sufficient. Check with the appropriate academic department or your advisor to be sure about grading options and standards.

### How long does it take to finish the General Education Program?

The program is designed to be completed in your first two years. You should try to finish your General Education requirements as soon as possible to keep your last years open for off-campus opportunities such as internships and study abroad. If you have not yet completed your mathematics requirement, it is essential that you speak

to your advisor about the exact nature of its connection to area 5, the Natural Sciences.

### May I be exempted from General Education or some curricular area in which I have prior experience?

No, all undergraduate students at American University are required to complete the General Education Program. You must also complete the college writing and university mathematics requirements. If you have experience in a curricular area, consider the broad range of disciplines represented in the area. For example, area 1, the Creative Arts, offers courses in literature, communications, the fine arts, and the performing arts. This affords you the opportunity of breadth and context for areas in which you already have knowledge.

### May I take General Education courses at another school?

Due to the unique nature of General Education courses, how they're taught, and their connection to the learning objectives and values of the university, once students are enrolled at American University, they must complete all 31 hours of General Education courses here. You may not substitute courses at other institutions or other American University courses. Special exceptions, however, apply to transfer students and entering students who have approved advanced placement credentials.

### May I take General Education courses during the summer?

Certainly. Many General Education courses are offered during the summer, and special care is taken to make sure that foundation and second-level sequences are offered in consecutive sessions. It is therefore possible to complete entire curricular areas in a single summer. Fulfilling General Education requirements in summer courses at AU is perfectly acceptable and often more convenient.

### Do advanced placement examinations count for General Education credit?

Yes, but specific articulations apply. Students presenting a 4 or 5 on the advanced placement exam; 75 percent on the CLEP exam; or grades for which they have gotten credit from the British A-level, CEGEP, IB, or German Abitur may be able to apply the credit for up to four General Education courses. This applies only to courses taken prior to entering American University. See your academic advisor or consult our table of examinations and their approved articulations at [www.american.edu/gened](http://www.american.edu/gened).

### I am a transfer student. Do I get General Education credit for courses I have taken before coming to American University?

First, welcome to AU. You've made a smart choice! While transfer students must still fulfill the 31 hours of General Education, academic advisors will match courses taken prior to entering AU with General Education courses to determine whether they qualify for credit in the program. It is technically possible for all 10 hours to be transferred with approval of the student's dean. Also, if a student transfers 6 hours in one curricular area, the sequencing requirement is waived. But, once enrolled at AU, no further courses may be taken elsewhere.

### For More Information

General Education Program  
Leonard Hall, First Floor  
[www.american.edu/gened](http://www.american.edu/gened)  
[gened@american.edu](mailto:gened@american.edu)  
202-885-3839



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sources: [www.epa.gov](http://www.epa.gov) and [www.environmentaldefense.org](http://www.environmentaldefense.org)

## General Education Program

American University  
4400 Massachusetts Avenue, NW  
Washington, DC 20016

[www.american.edu/gened](http://www.american.edu/gened)  
[gened@american.edu](mailto:gened@american.edu)