

## General Education at EIU

### SENIOR SEMINAR MISSION

Adopted by CAA, March 2, 2000

with minor modifications based on CAA actions (February 22, 2001 and April 26, 2001)

Revised by CAA on October 15, 2009

#### Definition

The Senior Seminar at Eastern Illinois University is designed to be a cross-disciplinary culminating experience that will provide students with an opportunity to apply concepts and use skills developed in both their general education and major courses. Information about topics of major importance (e.g. the Holocaust, Social Movements, Women in Science, Technology, Controversies in Education, Sociobiology, etc.) will be read, analyzed, discussed, and written about in a three semester-hour seminar led by a qualified faculty member of a discipline different from those of the students. To allow ample time for writing and discussion, senior seminars will be limited to a maximum of 25 students. As an element of the general education curriculum, each senior seminar shall focus on some aspect of citizenship.

Regardless of content and delivery format, the rigor of all senior seminars shall be consistent and appropriate for an upper-division capstone course in the general education curriculum that supports the university's mission:

*Eastern Illinois University is a public comprehensive university that offers superior, accessible undergraduate and graduate education. Students learn the methods and results of free and rigorous inquiry in the arts, humanities, sciences, and professions, guided by a faculty known for its excellence in teaching, research, creative activity, and service. The University community is committed to diversity and inclusion and fosters opportunities for student-faculty scholarship and applied learning experiences within a student-centered campus culture. Throughout their education, students refine their abilities to reason and to communicate clearly so as to become responsible citizens and leaders.*

*EIU Mission Statement*

#### Rationale

The purpose of Senior Seminar is to broaden the educational experience for seniors using a cross-disciplinary, synthesizing approach. Under the guidance of a faculty member from a department other than their own, students of various majors will come together to read, discuss, and write about the topic of the individual seminar.

This experience will afford an ideal opportunity for students to reflect on their particular education in the light of a range of cross-disciplinary concerns which will be available in senior seminars each semester. The exposure to another discipline's viewpoint on an issue as provided by the faculty member, coupled with the cross-disciplinary flavor provided by the mixture of students from different disciplines, should create an ideal atmosphere for broadening views and judging the applicability as well as the limits of one's training toward the understanding and resolving of problems which are truly cross-disciplinary in scope.

The senior seminar is an integral, important, and distinctive component of EIU's general education curriculum. As such, it should be a culminating experience in which students are challenged to consider their collective academic, extracurricular and other undergraduate experiences and apply them in ways that broaden and enhance their readiness to pursue additional graduate or professional study or to begin or continue their journey into a diverse, global and ever-changing world of social, civic and career opportunities and responsibilities.

## **Objectives**

The senior seminar should give students experiences in synthesizing, analyzing, and refining ideas/concepts while practicing oral and written communication. To this end, students will

- have the opportunity to obtain information on a topic from a variety of written sources, some including quantitative data.
- demonstrate their critical thinking skills by processing information from diverse sources.
- practice their ability to conduct a rational dialogue with others on topics generated by course materials and outside research.
- express in written and oral forms their synthesis of a topic and a reasoned defense of conclusions flowing from the synthesis.
- bring the skills and viewpoints acquired in their major curricula to bear on problems/situations not directly studied in their major field.
- find links between their formal course work and contemporary problems/events.
- learn to analyze their own views in light of readings and discussions in order to make informed, responsible, and ethical civic and personal decisions.

## **Assessment**

The senior seminar carries three hours of credit because:

- It provides faculty adequate time to deliver a challenging and intellectually rigorous course whose credit hours parallel those of other senior-level offerings; and
- It facilitates senior-level assessment of general education.

It is appropriate that university assessment occur during the senior seminar so that valid and meaningful data can be obtained to guide faculty and administration in ensuring that the university is achieving its mission and that the senior seminar is fulfilling its mission and purpose. As a result, various required activities in the senior seminar will assess Eastern's three undergraduate learning goals:

- to enhance student literacy and oral communication;
- to encourage students to think critically and reflectively; and
- to introduce students to knowledge central to responsible global citizenship.

All senior seminars must assess students' performance in these three areas. Additional assessment of an individual senior seminar is the responsibility of the instructor and should be based on the instructor's established learning objectives for the course.

Assessment activities should be scheduled in ways that minimize disruption of the academic content and flow of the course.

## **Formats**

Senior seminars should be offered in multiple formats, including traditional, weekend, short courses, online, study abroad and others that prepare students for the transition to post-academic environments where such formats could be used for professional development and other forms of training.

## **Approval of Senior Seminars**

Senior seminars must be approved by department and college curriculum committees before being submitted to CAA.