



THE UNIVERSITY OF WINNIPEG

Office of the Dean

Faculty of Arts

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TO: Jan Stewart, Provost, and Chair, Academic Planning

FROM: Glenn Moulaison 

SUBJECT: Social Science/Humanities Designation

For the benefit of new members of Academic Planning, I will start with some **background**.

As part of University of Winnipeg “General Degree Requirements”, all students must complete a minimum 12 credit hours of courses designated as “Humanities”; students in the 4-year BA, BBA or BKin must complete a minimum 12 credit hours of courses designated as “Social Science”. The list of the “subject area courses” that fulfill both these requirements are listed in the *Calendar*.

Courses originating in Departments that have historically been considered “Humanities” or “Social Science” fulfill this requirement and are (I assume) automatically given this designation by the Senate Curriculum Committee (or at least not queried). There are a few exceptions: it may happen, for instance, that a Humanities Department chooses to not allow a particular course to fulfill the Humanities requirement. An example would be FREN-3204 French Morphology and Syntax.

As far as I know, there is no current “official” list of Humanities or Social Science Departments at the University of Winnipeg, and it would perhaps be difficult to come up with one. In the days of the One Big Faculty, perhaps this list did exist. Most of the Departments that are understood as being part of the Humanities group or of the Social Science group are in the Faculty of Arts; but over the years, the Faculty of Arts has had some Departments migrate out. Anthropology used to be in Arts, as was Economics. According to the *Calendar*, all courses in both of these Departments fulfill the Social Science requirement, so they could be considered to be “Social Science” Departments as much as Political Science, Psychology, and Sociology are. There are also in Arts some newer (relatively speaking) Departments that are considered to be primarily “Interdisciplinary”, being neither Humanities or Social Science: Criminal Justice, Urban and Inner-City Studies, Indigenous Studies, Women’s and Gender Studies.

As far back as anyone can remember, **the process by which courses originating in (historically) non-Social Science or non-Humanities Departments/Units/Programs qualify as fulfilling** the Social Science or Humanities requirement involves the Senate Curriculum Committee “consulting” Arts Council, the assembly of Deans and Chairs. Often, it meant having the requesting Chair, Coordinator, or faculty member appearing at Arts Council in order to “make the case” for a particular designation. All this was done in the absence of any established criteria.

A few years ago, at some point during my first term as Dean, **Arts Council decided to call a “moratorium”** on considering further requests for designations from non-Social Science or non-Humanities Departments/Units/Programs. Some Chairs felt that students should be taking Social Science/Humanities courses from the historical Social Science and Humanities Departments in Arts; others chafed at the *ad hoc* nature of the process given the fact Arts Council has no real role in the governance structure of the University (other than the fact that (most of) its members are Senators. It was decided that this—*i.e.* decision-making about (really, any) general degree requirements—should be a matter dealt with by Academic Planning. Although I did have it placed on the agenda of Academic Planning a few years ago when I was a member, and there was a discussion about striking some kind of sub-committee (like the ICR Committee) to further the discussion (process, establishing criteria, *etc.*), there was no follow-up.

In early 2021, **Arts Council was queried again** by the Senate Curriculum Committee as to whether we could **lift the “moratorium”**, and in the course of the discussion (Arts Council of 24 March 2021), it was decided again that Academic Planning should be where discussion on this matter should at least begin. This was on the agenda of the 13 April 2021 meeting of Academic Planning, at which an *ad hoc* committee to consider what to do with was struck with me as Chair, and **Kelly Gorkoff** (Chair, Criminal Justice) and **Brandon Christopher** (Chair, English) as members.

The *ad hoc* committee met a few times in the course of the past year. Although we did initially consider establishing criteria for those wanting to submit courses for consideration as possibly fulfilling the requirements—along the line of the ICR process—further discussion on the actual purpose of these requirements led us to explore another option, and the first step in this was to do an informal survey of what other Canadian universities were doing in this area.

I went ahead and scanned the website of twenty-five universities (Dalhousie, Acadia, St. Mary’s, Mount Saint Vincent, UNB, UPEI, McGill, Concordia, Guelph, Waterloo, McMaster, Toronto, Brock, Trent, Western, York, Brandon, Manitoba, Regina, Saskatchewan, Alberta, Calgary, Lethbridge, UBC, UVIC) in search of “general degree requirements”, “Humanities/Social Science requirements”, “breadth”, etc.

Here are my findings:

- 1) Beyond “electives”, except for four universities (UPEI, McMaster, McGill, and Waterloo), all did have some form of significant (core, breadth, distribution)

requirement, either university-wide (all students) or faculty-specific (e.g. students in Science having to take non-Science courses) similar to our Humanities/Social Science requirement.

- 2) Of the 21 universities who have similar requirements, the vast majority (17) require students to fulfill them by taking courses in identified “subjects”, “departments”, “programs”, “disciplines”, or “faculties”. The ones who have “lists of courses” (irrespective of department/program/etc.) are the following:
 - a) University of Saskatchewan (<https://programs.usask.ca/arts-and-science/policies.php#BABScDegreeRequirements>);
 - b) University of Toronto (complicated: <https://artsci.calendar.utoronto.ca/hbahbsc-requirements>);
 - c) Brandon University (pages 43-44 of the Calendar, <https://www.brandonu.ca/calendar/files/2022/05/Undergraduate-Calendar-2022-23-Final.pdf>);
 - d) University of Lethbridge (the closest to what we do, a Liberal Education Requirement (https://www.ulethbridge.ca/artsci/advising/gler?gclid=CjwKC_Ajwo_KXBhAaEiwA2RZ8hNTXQRyjERVkjMv_zYoSTcUkOIhxGsrferDd1J4wOigvpqcnfBSIBoCB1cQAvD_BwE), with a form (<https://www.ulethbridge.ca/liberal-education/course-list-form>) to submit courses for consideration, and criteria (https://www.ulethbridge.ca/sites/default/files/2020/10/liberal_education_list_criteria_september_2020_1.pdf).

The *ad hoc* committee’s understanding of the purpose of general degree requirements like our Humanities/Social requirements seemed to be confirmed by this informal scan. At most universities with such requirements, it is clear that they are in place in order to ensure 1) that students take courses outside their own area, further supporting the breadth requirement, rather than allowing courses in their areas to “double-up” as courses in other areas; and 2) that students encounter Humanities/Social Science subject matter, methodologies, practices, *etc.* from a perspective that can best be found within these very disciplines we have historically called the Humanities and Social Sciences.

Although we recognize the decision is up to Academic Planning (and Senate), the recommendations we are making are that

- 1) the “moratorium” become permanent, that the current list of “subject area courses” found in the *Calendar* would stand, but that, moving forward, Senate Curriculum allow courses *only from* Humanities and Social Science Departments to fulfill the requirement.
- 2) for the purposes of this requirement, “HUMANITIES” Departments and Programs are the following: Classics, East Asian Languages and Cultures, English, French Studies, German Studies, History, Italian Studies,

Philosophy, Religion and Culture, Rhetoric, Writing, and Communications, Spanish Studies, Theatre and Film (selected courses); “SOCIAL SCIENCE” Departments are Anthropology, Business and Administration (selected courses), Economics, Geography (only human and regional courses), Political Science, Psychology, Sociology.

- 3) **all new courses proposed by the Departments and Programs listed in 2) that did not receive the Humanities or Social Science designation because of the “moratorium” receive the relevant designation.**