

IAI Social and Behavioral Sciences Panel
Course Approval Criteria
Revised Fall 2025

An institutionally approved representative syllabus in electronic format is required by the panel for its review. Institutions should submit an actual and recent instructor syllabus which is not more than three years old. If the course is yet to be taught, a sample syllabus intended for future students is still required.

The representative course syllabus and any additional submission materials must include:

- **Institutional name**
- **Course prefix, number, and title**
- **Course description:** Including the full catalog course description is required. The course description should compare favorably with the proposed IAI course description.
- **Number of credit hours:** For combined lecture and lab/studio courses, please include lecture credit hours, lab/studio credit hours as well as contact hours for lecture and lab/studio components. Indicate if these are semester or quarter hours.
- **Prerequisites and co-requisites:** If prerequisites are required for a course, it is preferred that the course prefix, course number, course name, and when IAI approved, the IAI code, are included in the submitted syllabus. Important note: as a rule, general education (GECC) courses in IAI should not have prerequisites. There are a few exceptions to this rule for sequences such as written composition and calculus; see panel specific information. Major courses may have prerequisites as appropriate. Co-requisite courses should show the credit hour breakdown between the two courses.
- **Textbooks, additional readings, additional course materials:** Please note if different resources are required for different delivery modes. Course materials should reflect content outcomes and requirements, and should be recently produced. For published texts, please include author, title, edition, date of publication, publisher, and the ISBN. If the course utilizes online or OER materials, please include an active hyperlink; hyperlinks cannot be embedded in the LMS nor be blocked by a password because the panel needs to have full access to the resource.
- **Delivery mode:** traditional/nontraditional, in-person/online/hybrid, etc.
- **Course Objectives:** The course objectives should clearly support the course description.
- **Assignment descriptions:** Please include a detailed description of assignments, readings, projects, etc. Assignment details should be clearly evident and referenced, and show connection to the course learning objectives. Assignments should demonstrate the rigor and scope of the course.
- **Methods of evaluating student learning:** The syllabus should state clearly how learning outcomes will be assessed, such as through objective/subjective examinations, quizzes, written assignments, oral presentations, projects, etc.
- **Grading scale and assignment weighting:** Please provide a grading scale and indicate the relative weight of assignments or evaluation categories (e.g., exams, essays, projects, etc.).
- **Detailed course outline, daily/weekly/hourly schedule:** A detailed topical outline and weekly schedule that **goes beyond chapter numbers and titles from a textbook (or select readings)** must be included and it should provide specific details of topics being presented in class. This may include assignments, readings, projects, etc. as appropriate. This could be done using a few bullet points or a couple of sentences. This level of detail is also appropriate for the lab/studio outline in courses that contain a lab or studio component. The lab/studio outline should include similar information but also detail the tools, materials, equipment, and instruments being used and the outcomes or topics that the students will be exploring.

General Coding Practice:

A course can only be assigned to one IAI code/description per panel. Institutions should be clear and careful in determining which IAI code is identified for any syllabus submitted for approval. The institution should also ensure that the course meets the minimum semester credit hour requirement included with the IAI course description.

A student may “count” only one course per code in fulfilling transfer requirements, even though an institution may assign more than one course to a code. In some cases, however, students at schools on a quarter calendar may need to complete two courses to equate to a one-semester course. An equivalency in this circumstance would be three quarter-credits equals two semester credit hours and five quarter-credits equal three semester credit hours.

Panel Specific Requirements:

Note: Courses that do not follow the suggested IAI course description will not be approved.

Prerequisites

As a rule, general education courses should not have prerequisites. The prerequisites (including prefix, number and title) for any course to be approved as a course that will satisfy general education social and behavioral science should be listed on the submission form and in the syllabus. In addition, if a prerequisite is listed/required, a specific rationale must be provided in submission documents.

Course Content and Objectives (Student Learning Objectives)

The course content should verify the course description. An outline of the course content is expected (this could be included in the daily or weekly schedule). The objectives should state clearly the learning outcomes for students and should be stated in such a manner that it is clear how one would assess them.

Schedule and Methods of Evaluation

The submission should show a weekly or daily schedule indicating how the material will be covered. This schedule will be used to determine if appropriate time is being spent on specific topics that make up the course. Do not list simply, “Chapter 1, Chapter 2,” etc. The topics MUST be stated.

The means for evaluation can be given in this schedule – whether it is tests, projects, papers, etc. A grading scale should also be included and any weighting of the particular assessments.

Detailed Weekly Topical Outline

The course submission material/syllabus requires a detailed weekly/daily topical outline that is more descriptive than chapter numbers and titles. This should include topics being covered in class (not just textbook chapter titles), readings, and discussion. The submission should include not only topics being covered in class, but also readings and assignments.

Writing Requirements

Writing information should be detailed and included either as separate document or a clear section of the syllabus. Writing must be present in assessed components of the course for IAI approval that articulates an idea in a critical manner with consideration of the discipline and academic level of the course. Written components must be described in the syllabus and be clearly reflected in the grading scale. The nature and extent, breadth and scope of the writing required within the course should be meaningful and intentionally integrated with the disciplinary expectations. Writing components may include, but are not limited to: reaction papers, journals, essay questions on exams or class assignments, extended blogs/discussion posts,

research papers, lab reports, and problem sets. Extended blogs/discussion posts are defined as those that are significant and part of the assessed writing required in the course.

Discipline Specific Concerns

Geography - The syllabus must contain evidence of traditional analysis, such as introducing coordinate systems. It must also include digital map analysis, such as using Google Earth to examine locations and patterns over the earth. Please provide details of how maps are used to integrate spatial analysis on cultural or world regional topics.

History – History courses must include primary sources and formal writing. In addition, see information below regarding course approval of History courses as recommended by the IAI History major panel.

Political Science –

S5900: American/U.S. National Government I. Discussion of lawmaking in Congress, rulemaking in the bureaucracy and case proceedings in the judiciary is adequate coverage of public policy; a separate treatment of public policy is unnecessary. Course needs to cover national institutions and political behaviors in a single course.

S5904: International Relations. Discussion of structure and processes needs to include account of major theories: realism, liberalism, constructivism and variants and alternative theories.

S5905: Comparative Government. Coverage can be thematic or country-by-country. Selected countries need to include an advanced, Western democracy other than the United States and at least one country that is not an advanced, Western democracy.

Interdisciplinary – “Social and behavioral science interdisciplinary courses” are those that integrate two or more disciplines in the social and behavioral sciences. Courses will be survey in nature, broad in scope, and foundational in the sense that they provide students with a basis for intellectual development and further study in the various disciplines. The relationship between the disciplines will be made explicit in the course. Textbooks and readings from those disciplines will be a significant part of the course, and methods of instruction may include instructors from more than one of the disciplines teaching jointly. On satisfactory completion of an interdisciplinary social and behavioral science course, students will:

- derive a balance of the 1) concepts, 2) theories, 3) methods, and, 4) conclusions of each discipline.
Consider: What would be the perspective of a psychologist, for example? What would be the perspective of a sociologist? How would these differ?
- gain an understanding of at least one social science and one behavioral science.

Social Sciences

History
Human Geography
Economics
Political Science

Behavioral Sciences

Anthropology
Psychology
Sociology

Common Reasons SBS Courses Are Not Approved

To facilitate approval of submissions, it may be helpful to be aware of some common reasons for which courses have not been approved.

- Course does not match course description.

- Topical outline does not contain a level of detail to determine IAI content within the course.
- Course is too broad in scope – contains too many topics.
- Course is too narrow in scope – does not cover the necessary components as described in the course description.
- Course is not a lower division course.
- Course does not include writing as specified in the course criteria document.

History Course Assessment Criteria

The study of history exposes students to the complexities of human nature and the development of diverse cultures, values, institutions, and major events. Upon satisfactory completion of one or more history courses, students will:

- distinguish between primary and secondary sources as the foundation of modern historical scholarship;
- interpret primary sources critically by analyzing their historical contexts;
- formulate historical interpretations, both orally and in writing, and defend them critically with reference to primary and secondary sources;
- incorporate into historical interpretation, both orally and in writing, an understanding of historical causation reflecting a) knowledge of important figures and events and their chronological relationship to each other and b) an awareness of the contingent relationships among social, political, religious, intellectual, cultural and economic variables;
- acquire at one and the same time a comprehension of diverse cultures and of shared humanity, as evidenced both orally and in writing.

We direct both teachers and students of history to the National History Project's delineation of "History's Habits of the Mind" as a guide to the discipline's expectations for "interpretation".

*These are **Learning Outcomes for the Core History Courses** as identified by various sources. See below for references.*

History's Habits of the Mind

The perspectives and modes of thoughtful judgment derived from the study of history are many, and they ought to be its principal aim. Courses in history, geography, and government should be designed to take students well beyond formal skills of critical thinking, to help them through their own learning to:

1. understand the significance of the past to their own lives, both private and public, and to their society.
2. distinguish between the important and the inconsequential, to develop the "discriminating memory" needed for a discerning judgment in public and personal life.
3. perceive past events and issues as they were experienced by people at the time, to develop historical empathy as opposed to present- mindedness.
4. acquire at one and the same time a comprehension of diverse cultures and of shared humanity.
5. understand how things happen and how things change, how human intentions matter, but also how their consequences are shaped by the means of carrying them out, in a tangle of purpose and process.
6. comprehend the interplay of change and continuity, and avoid assuming that either is somehow more natural, or more to be expected, than the other.

7. prepare to live with uncertainties and exasperating, even perilous, unfinished business, realizing that not all problems have solutions.
8. grasp the complexity of historical causation, respect particularity, and avoid excessively abstract generalizations.
9. appreciate the often tentative nature of judgments about the past, and thereby avoid the temptation to seize upon particular "lessons" or history as cures for present ills.
10. recognize the importance of individuals who have made a difference in history, and the significance of personal character for both good and ill.
11. appreciate the force of the non-rational, the irrational, the accidental, in history and human affairs.
12. understand the relationship between geography and history as a matrix of time and place, and as context for events.
13. read widely and critically in order to recognize the difference between fact and conjecture, between evidence and assertion, and thereby to frame useful questions.

Habits of the Mind taken from:

Bradley Commission on History in Schools. Building a History Curriculum: Guidelines for Teaching History in Schools. Westlake, OH: National Council for History Education, 1995. p. 9.

National Council for History Education, Inc. <https://ncheteach.org/>