**Colonnade Program Course Proposal: Connections Category**

***Connections*:** **Understanding Individual and Social Responsibility**  
 *Connections* courses direct students to apply and integrate discipline-specific knowledge and skills to the significant issues challenging our individual and shared responsibility as global citizens. Students will learn to analyze and evaluate cultural contexts, examine issues on both a local and global scale, and apply system-level approaches to the stewardship of our social and physical environments. Although they may be used with a major or minor program, *Connections* courses are classes at the 200-level or above designed for the general student population, and may be taken *only after* students have earned at least 21 hours in **WKU Colonnade Program** coursework or have achieved junior status. *Connections* courses may not have graduate components or prerequisites other than approved courses within the **WKU Colonnade Program**.

The **Colonnade Program** is designed to incrementally build student skills in argumentation and the use of evidence beginning with discipline-specific coursework in the *Foundations* and *Explorations* categories. By extension, *Connections* courses are intended to be summative learning experiences in which students apply basic knowledge to larger and more complex social, global and systemic issues of concern, in other words, to use appropriate *evidence* to support cogent *arguments*. Proposals should address how *evidence and argument* are integral in the design of the course and the assessment of student learning.

Proposed courses must be designed to address specifically the goals and outcomes of one (1) of the subcategories listed below.

**Social and Cultural** (3 hours): Students will investigate ways in which individuals shape, and are shaped by, the societies and cultures within which they live. Courses will consider the ethical questions and shared cultural values that shape societal norms and behaviors, the independent and collective or collaborative artistic expression of those values, and/or the role of social and cultural institutions in developing and sustaining norms, values, and beliefs. Students who complete this course will:

1. Analyze the development of self in relation to others and society.
2. Examine diverse values that form civically engaged and informed members of society.
3. Evaluate solutions to real-world social and cultural problems.

**Local to Global** (3 hours): Students will examine local and global issues within the context of an increasingly interconnected world. Courses will consider the origins and dynamics of a global society, the significance of local phenomena on a global scale, and/or material, cultural, and ethical challenges in today’s world. Students who complete this course will:

1. Analyze issues on local and global scales.
2. Examine the local and global interrelationships of one or more issues.
3. Evaluate the consequences of decision-making on local and global scales.

**Systems** (3 hours): Students will examine systems, whether natural or human, by breaking them down into their component parts or processes and seeing how these parts interact. Courses will consider the evolution and dynamics of a particular system or systems and the application of system-level thinking. Students who complete this course will:

1. Analyze how systems evolve.
2. Compare the study of individual components to the analysis of entire systems.
3. Evaluate how system-level thinking informs decision-making, public policy, and/or the sustainability of the system itself.

**Glossary of Terms**

*Connections Subcategory Goals*: The broader statements in each subcategory that describe the type of learning experience fostered in the subcategory. The paragraphs preceding each subcategory’s list of three Connections student learning outcomes on page 1 of this document are the *Connections Subcategory Goals*. For example, in the Social and Cultural subcategory, the goals statement begins: “Students will investigate ways in which individuals shape, and are shaped by, the societies and cultures within which they live. . . . and/or the role of social and cultural institutions in developing and sustaining norms, values, and beliefs.”

*Course Goals*: Applicants must articulate how the proposed course will facilitate the Connections Subcategory Goals. This articulation results in a statement of *course goals*, a description of the specific learning experience that is fostered in the proposed course. For example, applicants in the Social and Cultural subcategory should explain specifically how the proposed course engages students in investigations of the “ways in which individuals shape, and are shaped by, the societies and cultures within which they live. . . . and/or the role of social and cultural institutions in developing and sustaining norms, values, and beliefs.”

*Connections Student Learning Outcomes* (Connections SLOs): The statements that describe, in behavioral terms, how students demonstrate that each course goal has been met. The *Connections student learning outcomes* (3 per subcategory) are listed on page 1 of this document and begin with the verbs *analyze, examine,* and *evaluate*. For example, a course goal for PHIL 212 is: “Students will examine how intersections of sex, race, class, and sexual orientation shape how gender is expressed.” The *Connections student learning outcome* that is aligned with this course goal is: Students will “analyze the development of self in relation to others and society.”

*Student Learning Outcomes* (SLOs): A *student learning outcome* is a clear, concise, measurable statement that describes, in behavioral terms, how students can demonstrate their mastery of a concept, process, skill, theory, etc. Course proposals and syllabi will likely include *student learning outcomes* in addition to the Connections SLOs, but are not required to. Applicants are encouraged to reference [Bloom’s Taxonomy](https://cft.vanderbilt.edu/guides-sub-pages/blooms-taxonomy/) and the WKU Center for Faculty Development’s [lecture by Dr. Jerry Daday](https://connect.wku.edu/p2ufwtqzqo4/?launcher=false&fcsContent=true&pbMode=normal) and the [PDF of the slides from the lecture](https://www.wku.edu/cfd/documents/learningobjectives.pdf) when composing measurable learning outcomes, in particular in choosing *verbs* that describe student learning (students *evaluate* and *synthesize* and *analyze*, for instance, rather than *understand* or *explore*).

*Assessment*: For the purposes of this document, *assessment* is “an ongoing process designed to monitor and improve student learning. Faculty explicitly define what they want students to learn, collect empirical data that indicate the extent of the learning, and use the data to improve the program.”[[1]](#footnote-1) *Assessment* must be distinguished from *evaluation* of student learning in the sense that instructors evaluate students and assign grades, which may not be used directly as an assessment for Connection courses. An *assessment* plan must determine the degree to which the course has facilitated student learning in the context of the Connections subcategory goals and Connections SLOs. Random sampling of 20% of the whole is often the best approach for assessing Connections SLOs for courses with multiple sections per semester. Assessment of a sample of the whole might be a better approach for courses that are offered only once or twice per year.

*Evaluation*: The determination of a student’s success or failure on a particular assignment or in a course. In other words, *evaluation* means assigning student grades. For the purposes of this application, *evaluation* is distinguished from assessment.

*Artifact*: The evidence of student learning that will be used in the assessment of Connections SLOs. *Artifacts* may be examinations, clean (unmarked) copies of student papers, a student-produced written synthesis/reflection of student learning, a project or presentation, or other tangible evidence of student learning may be assessed with the rubric provided by the Colonnade Committee or with another rubric proposed by the applicant.

**Application Process**

Applicants must complete each step of the process in order.

1. Download this application form and the sample Connections proposal from the Colonnade website and read each carefully. Consult with the Colonnade Committee Chair as questions arise and before submitting the proposal.
2. Draft the Connections Course Proposal and the Undergraduate Curriculum Committee’s [Proposal to Create a New Course](https://www.wku.edu/ucc/forms/course_create_new.docx) (if applicable) in consultation with the applicant’s home department and any other relevant departments.
3. E-mail the Connections Course Proposal, the UCC Proposal to Create a New Course, and a sample syllabus for the proposed course to [colonnadeplan@wku.edu](mailto:colonnadeplan@wku.edu) and, ideally, attend the Colonnade Committee meeting in which the course proposal will be considered.
4. When necessary, the applicant will need to meet (in person or via Skype, phone, or other means) with a consultant from the Colonnade Committee to discuss sections of the proposal that need to be refined or revised before full consideration. The Colonnade Committee Chair will make this determination and will arrange the required consultation.
5. If necessary, revise the proposal and complete #3 and #4 again.
6. After approval from the Colonnade Committee, proposals for new courses should continue through the normal curricular process, beginning with the College’s curriculum committee.

**Colonnade Connections Course Proposal**

**Systems Subcategory**

Proposal Contact Name, E-mail, and Phone:

College and Department: Proposal Date:

**1.** **Course** **Details:**

* 1. Course prefix (subject area), number and title:
  2. Credit hours:
  3. Prerequisites[[2]](#footnote-2):
  4. Crosslisted and/or equivalent courses (prefix and number):
  5. Expected number of sections offered each semester/year:
  6. Is this an existing course or a new course?
  7. Where will this course be offered? (Bowling Green main campus, regional campuses, online? List all.)

**2. Provide a brief course description (100-200 words).**

**3. Explain how this course provides a *capstone* learning experience for students in Colonnade (compared to an introductory learning experience).** Explicitly address how students in the course apply knowledge from multiple disciplines to the significant issues challenging our individual and shared responsibility as global citizens.

**4. List the *course goals* (see Glossary of Terms), and explain how are they aligned with the Connections student learning outcomes.** In the table below, describe in the right-hand column explicitly how the course meets each Connections SLO for the Systems subcategory. Descriptions in the right-hand column should be consistent with statements listing of course activities, readings, etc. in the syllabus attached to this application.

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Connections Student Learning Outcomes** | **How does the course meet these learning outcomes?**  **(Align course goals to Connections SLOs)** |
| *Example: Analyze how systems evolve.* | *Example: Students analyze both the development and evolution of the mental system within an individual (e.g., (i) the utilization of various mental and sensori-motor components in an individual’s development of a theory of mind and a capacity for joint attention, and (ii) causal and historical conditions of reference of singular terms and their neural realizers in an individual’s cognitive system) as well as the essential role that causal history plays in the development across individuals of mental states with propositional contents (e.g., how the evolution of syntactic processing in humans’ mental system can account for conditions of veridical representation of one’s environment).* |
| 1. Analyze how systems evolve. |  |
| 2. Compare the study of individual components to the analysis of entire systems. |  |
| 3. Evaluate how system-level thinking informs decision-making, public policy, and/or the sustainability of the system itself. |  |

**5. List additional student learning outcomes, beyond the three Connections SLOs, that will guide student learning in this course (if any).**

**6a. Explain how the department plans to assess each of the Connections student learning outcomes *beyond course grades*.** Applicants are encouraged, but not required, to adopt or adapt the Connections Student Learning Outcomes rubric (available on [the Colonnade website](https://www.wku.edu/colonnade/facultyresources.php)). Note: SACSCOC requires assessment of SLOs to compare Bowling Green campus, online, and regional campus learning experiences; some consideration of such a distinction must be included in the right-hand column, when applicable.

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Connections Student Learning Outcomes** | **Identify the “artifact(s)” (assignments, papers, activities, etc) that will be used for assessing each learning outcome *beyond course grades*. Applicants must be explicit in describing how the artifact(s) provides evidence of student learning for each Connections SLO.** | **Describe in detail the assessment methods the department will employ for this Connections course. Assessment plans must produce a *separate evaluative rating* for each Connections SLO.** |
| *Example: Analyze how systems evolve.* | *Example: The department will use several questions, added to the final exam, in order to assess how well the course’s learning outcomes are being met. Each question will correspond to a separate Connections Student Learning Outcome for the Systems Subcategory.* | *Example: At the end of each semester the final exam answers of 30% of the students in the course will be selected at random for assessment. Each answer will correspond to one of the three Colonnade Student Learning Outcomes. At the beginning of the next semester a faculty member will assess each answer using the attached rubric. The names of the students and of the instructor will be eliminated before the assessment takes place. Assessment results will be communicated to the Department Head, who will then follow up with the faculty who teach the course and the department.* |
| 1. Analyze how systems evolve. |  |  |
| 2. Compare the study of individual components to the analysis of entire systems. |  |  |
| 3. Evaluate how system-level thinking informs decision-making, public policy, and/or the sustainability of the system itself. |  |  |

**6b. Include the rubric that will be used for Connections assessment (either in the space below or as an attachment).** If the assessment plan will utilize the Connections rubric available on [the Colonnade website](https://www.wku.edu/colonnade/facultyresources.php), state as much.

**7. Evidence & Argument Artifact**. As the capstone experience for the Colonnade Program, Connections courses are expected to include activities, assignments, or other learning experiences that will produce at least one “artifact” (research paper, presentation, major project, etc.) that can be used to evaluate students’ ability to identify, synthesize, and make use of evidence in support of cogent and persuasive arguments. What “artifact” in the proposed course could be used for this purpose? (Note: This could be, but is not required to be, the same “artifact” identified in 6a above.)

**8. Attach a sample course syllabus.** The course syllabus must contain the three Connections student learning outcomes for the subcategory as well as any additional student learning outcomes listed in this application, and those learning outcomes must appear in every section's syllabus.

**Evaluation Form for Connections Proposals**

This form is made available to applicants in order to provide a sense of the criteria by which the application will be evaluated by the Colonnade Committee. An evaluation form completed by the Committee Chair will be returned to the applicant no more than ten business days following the Committee meeting during which the proposal is considered. Future iterations of proposals that are returned for revision must address each area identified as “requires revision.” Additional feedback from the committee might prompt revisions to the proposal that are not required. Such improvements are certainly encouraged.

*Evaluative Criterion Rating*

1. Application is complete. Information provided for each item is ❑ Acceptable ❑ Requires Revision

the information required. Application is accompanied by the

required materials, including a syllabus, UCC Proposal to Create

a New Course w/Department approval (if applicable), and

Connections assessment rubric.

Feedback:

2. The explanation of how the course provides a *capstone* and ❑ Acceptable ❑ Requires Revision

integrative learning experience is sufficient.

Feedback:

3. Course goals are described in detail and are aligned with ❑ Acceptable ❑ Requires Revision

the Connections student learning outcomes.

Feedback:

4. The proposed artifact for assessment is appropriate for the ❑ Acceptable ❑ Requires Revision

purposes of Colonnade assessment.

Feedback:

5. The proposed assessment plan is manageable and reasonable ❑ Acceptable ❑ Requires Revision

for the department to commit to for the foreseeable future.

Feedback:

6. Statements on the application are consistent with the sample ❑ Acceptable ❑ Requires Revision

course syllabus (course goals, student learning outcomes, etc.).

Feedback:

7. The course provides instruction in identifying, synthesizing, and ❑ Acceptable ❑ Requires Revision

utilizing evidence in support of cogent and persuasive arguments.

Feedback:

8. The course syllabus is readable and easily understood from a ❑ Acceptable ❑ Requires Revision

student’s perspective. The application and syllabus are

generally error-free.

Feedback:

Overall Evaluation: ❑ Course is approved ❑ Proposal may be reconsidered after revision

1. Allen, M. J. (2006). *Assessing General Education Programs.* San Francisco: Jossey-Bass. p. 1. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. Courses may require prerequisites only when those prerequisites are within the Colonnade Foundations and/or Explorations listing of courses. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)