

Writing Course/Calendar Descriptions

Format and Style

1. Aim for 3-5 lines of approximately 75 words.
2. Use full sentences.
3. Write in the present tense (e.g., “Students investigate...,” not “Students will investigate...”).
4. Use student-centred language, focusing on what students learn and do (e.g., “Students explore...,” and “Students examine...,” instead of “This course introduces students to...”). This communicates to the student audience the active role they need to take in their learning.
5. Avoid starting with “This course . . .”.
6. Avoid discipline-specific jargon or specialized terms unlikely to be understood by potential students.

Content

1. Start with a topic sentence clarifying the purpose of the course or significance of the subject matter.
2. Provide a concise yet comprehensive summary of the course content.
3. Do not include syllabus-level information likely to change over time (e.g., specific texts, software packages, field trips etc.)
4. Avoid specifying activities and assignments.
5. Avoid rhetorical questions.

Adapted from: <http://sites.allegheny.edu/registrar/curriculum-committee-forms/guidelines-for-course-descriptions/>

Examples

SOCI 4860

Sociology provides tools to understand our own lives and society, as well as distant ones. Students examine models and concepts sociologists use to think about society in terms of its maintenance and construction through everyday social interactions. Subjects that may be explored include culture and its effects; socialization; mass media; how gender is constructed and its influences; social inequality; world-views and life-choices; sexuality and society; and crime and deviance. (71 words)

FINA 2190

In the field of contemporary art, artists increasingly require an expanded understanding of interdisciplinary practice and time-based art. Students create a series of durational projects using a variety of interdisciplinary approaches while investigating the historical and cultural significance of performance art. They critically investigate the de-materialization of the art object, the relationship between performer and audience, and the hyper-performativity of the contemporary subject. Students use performance as a tool to address and respond to the politics of the body, the surrounding socio-cultural environment, and the artistic process. (87 words)

POLI 2255

Political processes, actors, and institutions are affected by a variety of factors loosely connected to the Internet and its associated platforms. In this course, students explore how digital media—social media, online chat rooms, electronic voting processes, and electronic journalism—are impacting politics in advanced liberal democracies and influencing the practice and meaning of citizenship. They examine the many ways in which technology is impacting the practice of politics and the experience and meaning of citizenship. (76 words)

PSYC 2425

With the increase in life expectancy worldwide, it is important for people to understand the implications of adult development and aging on physical, social, and psychological health. In this course, students critically examine social, cultural, emotional, physical, and cognitive development associated with adulthood, aging, death and dying. They analyze the strengths and limitations of various psychological theories, models and research findings related to adulthood and aging. Students explore how aging affects a number of aspects of our lives such as memory, decision-making, problem-solving, health and relationships. (87 words)

KINS 2206

Research in kinesiology is often quantitative in nature and employs scientific methods. An understanding of statistical analyses and how to interpret them are essential to reading and critically evaluating kinesiology research. In this course, students learn about the stages of the research process, sources of data, descriptive statistics, applications of the normal curve and Z-scores, basic probability, standard error, statistical inference (confidence intervals and hypothesis testing), t-tests, one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA), correlation, regression, and selected non-parametric analysis. (78 words)

FMGT 4560

Students examine accounting concepts encountered in the not-for-profit and charities sector. Topics include the creation and good governance of not-for-profit organization (NFPOs) as well as the differences in accounting from for-profit entities including fund accounting, the use of the restricted fund method, and the deferral method of accounting for contributions. Students learn the characteristics of registered charities, types of government organizations and use of accounting software for NFPOs. (68 word)