Intellectual Inquiry – Social Sciences

Although they vary in terms of content and intellectual traditions, foundational courses in the social sciences promote an understanding, based on living bodies of theory and research, of individuals in the context of social interactions, groups, and societies. Human societies are diverse and varied, with different understandings of the world among them, and with a multiplicity of actors within them who do not necessarily share the same views or goals. As a consequence, human phenomena are not as easily predictable as natural phenomena, and social science inquiry can lead to many plausible answers to any given question. Nevertheless, inquiry in the social sciences is empirical, guided by rigorous but varied theories and methods. Thus, students who complete a General Education course in the social sciences should understand how a discipline's modes of scholarly inquiry have led to the development of the discipline's shared bodies of knowledge and the interplay between a social science discipline and its broader social context. The successful social science course will present a variety of approaches to any given question about social phenomena, preparing students to critically evaluate the variety of social situations with which they may be confronted in their everyday lives.

1. Demonstrate knowledge of the theories associated with a social science discipline, either broadly or as applied to an important social science topic.

2. Demonstrate an understanding of methods and ethics of inquiry that lead to social scientific knowledge.

3. Demonstrate an ability to identify and use appropriate information resources to substantiate evidence-based claims.

4. Demonstrate knowledge of how a social science discipline influences society.

5. Demonstrate an ability to identify a well-formulated question pertinent to a social science discipline and to employ the discipline's conceptual and methodological approaches in identifying reasonable research strategies that could speak to the question.