

A DEFINITION OF GENERAL EDUCATION AT PRINCE GEORGE'S COMMUNITY COLLEGE

Unlike a course whose content is mostly or exclusively that of the specific discipline from which it is taught, a general education course must also convey a general body of knowledge, skills, and values. It must satisfy general education requirements for any major or degree program for this reason. A general education course thus requires those who teach it to strike a balance between two distinct yet related objectives. General knowledge, skills, and values must be distinguished from discipline-specific content and not only integrated with it, so that students can succeed in all disciplines and not just the specific one from which a given general education course is taught. The body of general knowledge, skills, and values conveyed in it must not be an addendum or afterthought, therefore, but rather be significant, explicitly taught, and easily identifiable.

Instances of these courses also manifest themselves in that the discipline-specific content a general education course conveys is general in nature as well. With regard to even its discipline-specific content, a general education course is one in which students survey the landscape of a given discipline rather than detailing its nuances. It conveys a body of general knowledge, skills, and values that is non discipline-specific precisely so that students will have the opportunity to survey the landscapes of multiple disciplines on their way to choosing which specific one(s) they would like to study in greater detail. The fact that this body is conveyed via a discipline-specific course affords students the chance to apply their general knowledge, skills, and values at the same time they are surveying the numerous specific disciplines from which general education courses are taught.

The best way to initially determine whether a given course is an instance of general education thus comes in the form of two questions:

- (1) Will the course satisfy a general education requirement for all students irrespective of their major or degree program?
- (2) In addition to the content specific to the discipline from which it is taught, does the course convey a body of general knowledge, skills, and values that pertains to all academic disciplines?

If the answer to either of these questions is no, then the course is not an instance of general education and will not be granted (or be permitted to maintain) general education status.