

“THREADS” IN GENERAL EDUCATION

A longtime criticism of the distributive model for General Education is that a student never studies any discipline or topic (other than his or her own major) in any depth. Such General Education courses are traditionally at the 010 level, offering a brief and often dizzying survey of the discipline and are usually taken in the freshman and sophomore years. Furthermore, such an approach rarely gives the student an opportunity to see the connections between various disciplines or to see how different disciplines might approach the same topic but from different perspectives.

The purpose of a “thread” is to give the student an opportunity to delve deeper into a topic of interest, across disciplines, in depth, and at a level beyond 010. A thread brings the student in contact with complementary and competing viewpoints and recognizes that any issue or problem can be viewed from multiple perspectives. Cross-disciplinary study helps students integrate knowledge from various disciplines through the study of a major idea. These classes emphasize the integrative and creative qualities of thought characteristic of the generally-educated person. The pedagogy used in thread courses address the goals of General Education to a significant degree, with particular emphasis on critical thinking and communication. Depending on the nature of the thread, the other General Education goals may also be heavily emphasized.

A thread typically consists of three courses that all relate to a particular topic. Among those schools that have threads, many have rules that require the three courses to be from three different disciplines, for example, and at three different levels (typically one each at the 100, 200, and 300 levels). Setting up a thread is relatively straightforward matter. Once a topic is chosen, interested faculty propose courses that address that topic. While there may be many existing courses that fit into a particular topic, it may be necessary to create new courses with the General Education goals in mind. In order to provide for flexibility in scheduling, a thread should have a sufficient number of courses (at least six) for the student to choose from. Additionally, there needs to be a sufficient number of threads available to accommodate a large number of students. A thread remains on the books so long as there is interest among both the faculty and students. New threads can be introduced at any time in response to world events (cultural, political, societal, etc.)

Even though a thread would be only nine credits, choosing to require threads in KU’s General Education Program would be a significant departure from our current distributive model. Some potential, but not insurmountable, issues include:

- As they are now designed, most upper-level courses in most disciplines are designed for majors only. As such, these courses have prerequisites in the discipline, minimally the 010 course that we are trying to move beyond. Consequently, new upper-level course would have to be developed, courses with no prerequisites and designed for the non-major.
- As they are now configured, some majors have no room in the junior and senior for any courses other than those in the major.
- Transfer students frequently have completed all their general education requirements before they come to KU, which means courses at the freshman and sophomore level. Requiring them to take upper-level courses in a thread would mean that they would have to take more than the required number of General Education credits. Should a student with a designated number of transfer credits be exempt from threads?
- A student who takes a minor would study a topic at a depth greater than the 010 level, thereby meeting one of the two major objectives of a thread, but most minors consist of courses in one discipline only, thereby avoiding the other major objective of a thread. Should a student with a minor be exempt from threads?

On the other hand, there are obvious advantage to threads:

- Students have the opportunity to explore topics in depth across semesters and from different perspectives.
- Faculty have the opportunity to share the passion for their discipline to a much wider audience, offering courses that might not attract enough students if restricted to majors only.
- Faculty can develop new courses that might not fit into their major program, but one that they have a strong desire to teach.
- New threads, and consequently new courses, can be added in response to recent world events and the ever-changing times in which we live.

Some examples of threads from other schools can be found on the following pages.

SOME EXAMPLES OF THREAD TOPICS

<p>American Indian Experience African Studies Archaeology Asian Studies Beyond the Workplace Changing Worlds Cities Classic Greek Civilization Community Studies Conflict in Public and Private Life Creativity: Ideas & Innovation Death and Dying Earth and Environment Ethics European Studies Faith and Reason Family Studies Food, Resources, and Global Sustainability Foundations of U.S. Identities: Our Cultural Heritages Freedom and Social Control Freedom, Privacy, & Technology Gender and Identity</p>	<p>Global Change: Integration and Fragmentation Health, Illness, and Healing Healthy People/Healthy Places Imagination into Form Knowledge, Rationality and Understanding Latin American Studies Leadership For Change Living in the Global Marketplace Made in the USA: Arts, Technology, and Innovation Making Myths, Sharing Faith Making War and Peace Marginality and Difference Media Studies Medieval Studies Middle East Studies Morality Nineteenth Century Perception Perspectives From the Outside: Popular Culture Professionalism, Society and Ethics</p>	<p>Professions & Power Religion Renaissance Studies Revolution and Evolution in the Americas Roots of Western Culture Science in the Liberal Arts Sciences – Humanities Self and Identity Sexualities Society and Media South American and Latino Cultures The American Mosaic The Asian World The European Renaissance The Human Journey The Nature and Language of Meaning The U.S. Civil Rights Movement Theory and Practice of Decision Making Twentieth Century Transformations Visualizing the World Women's Studies</p>
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SOME EXAMPLES OF COURSES IN THREADS

<p style="text-align: center;">Health, Illness, and Healing</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • SOC 356 Sociology of Health Care • ANT 320 Culture and Disease • SW 322 Health Care and Social Services • HST 370 History of Medicine and Health • PSY 368 Psychology of Physical Disabilities • BIO 309 Plants and Human Health 	<p style="text-align: center;">Earth and Environment</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ANT 340 Culture and Environment • BIO 105 Environment Science • ECO 345 Environmental and Resource Economics • ENG 382 Nature Writing • GEO 300 Geology and the Environment • LIB 330 The Idea of Nature • NRM 451 Natural Resource Policy
<p style="text-align: center;">Morality</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • PHE 444 Global Health • PHE 455 Film and Health • PHL 309 Business Ethics • PHL 310 Environmental Ethics • PHL 311 Morality of Punishment • PHL 313 Life and Death Issues • PHL/HST 399 American Values/Conflict • PHL 481 Biomedical Ethics • PHL 455 Morality and Health Care • PS 325 Politics and the Legal Enforcement of Morals • PSY 410 Psychology of Moral Development • SCI 363 Ethics in Science 	<p style="text-align: center;">Sexualities</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • CFS 410 Sex and the Family • ENG 308 Gay and Lesbian Fiction • SOC 344 Gender and Sexualities • WS 399 Race and Sexuality in United States Culture • WS 360 Introduction to Queer Studies • WS 370 History of Sexualities • WS 399 Lesbian Spaces • WS 428 Lesbian History in the United States

Making Myths, Sharing Faith

- ANTH/RELS 327 Belief Systems
- ANTH 329 North American Indians
- ART 20 Ancient to Medieval Art and Culture
- CORE 159 Time Warps: Religion, Science, Technology and Cultures of Time
- CORE 166 The Sacred Journey: Religions of the World
- ENGL 257 Literature of Western Civilization
- FLEN 211 Gods of Greece
- FLEN 212 Heroes of Greece
- FLEN 363 Literature of Ancient Greece
- FLEN 364 Literature of Rome
- FLEN 441/HIST 444 Ancient Greek Civilization
- FLEN 442/HIST 446 Civilization of Ancient Rome
- PHIL 240 Belief and Reality
- PHIL/RELS 306 Hindu Thought
- PHIL 309 Ancient Philosophy
- RELS 307 Buddhism
- RELS 308 Confucianism and Daoism
- THEF 467 Theatre History

Food, Resources, and Global Sustainability

- AGECE 101 Agricultural Economics and Agribusiness
- AGECE 481 Agricultural Markets in a Global Economy
- ANTH 100 Introduction to Anthropology
- CORE 163 Globalization
- CORS 208 Science on Your Plate
- ECON 201 Principles of Economics
- ECON 272 Foundations of Economic Analysis
- ECON 385 Environmental Economics
- ENT 322 Economic Entomology
- FCS 411 Global Nutrition
- GEOG 165 Human Geography
- GEOG 200 World Regional Geography
- GEOG 360 Population Dynamics and Distribution
- PHIL 103 Ethics
- PHIL 452 Environmental Philosophy
- SOIL 345 Sustainable Agriculture

Made in the USA: Arts, Technology, and Innovation

- AMST 301 Studies in American Culture
- ANTH 431 Introduction to Historical Archaeology
- ARCH 486 American Architecture
- ART 213 History and Theory of Modern Design
- ART 271 Interface Design
- BUS 321 Marketing
- CORE 162 Feel the Groove: Generations of Jazz from Blues to Hip-Hop
- CORE 164 Understanding Media: Culture, Meaning and Power
- DAN 421 Dance History
- ENGL 344 Survey of American Literature
- HIST 416 Rise of Modern America
- MUSH 201 History of Rock Music
- MUSH 410 A Survey of Jazz History
- MUSH 44- Studies in American Music
- PSYC 461 Human Computer Interaction
- THEA 100 U.S. Contemporary Theatre

Beyond the Workplace

- COMM 233 Interpersonal Communications
- CORE 162 Feel the Groove: Generations of Jazz from Blues to Hip-Hop
- DAN 100 Dance in Society
- DAN 112 Recreational Dance Forms
- PEP 310 Cultural and Philosophic Aspects of Sport
- PHIL 103 Ethics
- PSYC 101 Introduction to Psychology
- PSYC 320 Social Psychology
- REC 260 Leisure and Society
- REC 420 Experiential Education
- RRT 304 Resource, Recreation and tourism Field Studies
- RRTID 287 Professional Foundations of Resource, Recreation and Tourism
- SOC 101 Introduction to Sociology
- SOC 230 Social Problems

Society and Media

- COM 220 Media Literacy
- COM 372 Global Communications
- LIB 373 American Society and Mass Culture
- PLS 340 American Political Opinion and Mass Media
- PSY 349 Psychology Applied to Media
- SOC 366 Sociology of Media

Gender and Identity

- AAA 352 Black Women's Cultures and Communities
- BIO 325 Human Sexuality
- CJ/WGS 320 Crimes Against Women
- CJ/WGS 310 Sexual Orientation, Law and Policy
- LIB 325 Understanding the Gay Life Cycle
- SOC 375 Perspective on Masculinity