Application for Course Inclusion as a General Education Course (not including FYS)

Course number: WLC 3320  Title: France Through Film

Catalog description:

This course will give students an opportunity to look at a culture other than their own through its representation in films, and to help them discover unknown aspects of their own culture through the examination of a foreign one. While watching a selection of French movies, we will explore aspects of recent French history and their influence on contemporary French culture; reflect on the interaction of various cultural (social) systems in France and French-speaking communities on other continents; work on analytical skills; learn how to read film, literature, essays and relate them to a historical/social/cultural background. The films chosen illustrate key periods of modern French society from the pre-Revolutionary period to the beginning of the 21st century.

Instructor name(s): (if more than one instructor teaches)
1. Monique Oyallon
2. 
3. 
4. 
5. 

For which area are you requesting your course approval?

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Please include course syllabi and relevant related course documents to support your request for inclusion.

(1) Describe how your course will advance the overall mission of the GE Program.

The general education program seeks to help students acquire knowledge of western culture and its relationship to non-western culture; knowledge of the foundations and characteristics of educated discourse; knowledge of the approaches of the liberal arts disciplines; knowledge of the unity and diversity of humanity—and it asks students to exhibit skills in effective written and oral communication.

Investigating a non-American culture (French) through French-language films fosters an inquiring mind and encourages comparison and critical distance from one’s own culture. Getting exposed to different information and images allows for variety of paths in seeking truth and acquiring new knowledge. The cultural familiarity and understanding fostered by observing and analyzing foreign (French) creative works such as current films directly promotes global connectedness and the understanding and evaluation of multiple perspectives. Awareness of how problems such as colonization, decolonization, and migration are presented by various filmmakers serves to further improve reasoning skills and raise awareness of civil responsibility.
(2) Describe (when appropriate) how the course will include any or all of the following: a) substantial opportunities for oral and/or written communication, b) encourage active and participatory learning, or c) promote application of general education knowledge, skills, and dispositions to students’ lives outside of and beyond the university experience.

a) Students will discuss every week in class topics brought up in the selected films (whole class or group discussion), a discussion prepared by and facilitated by writing beforehand short but focused and substantial essays (about 300 words per week). The portfolio requirement at the end of the semester gives students an opportunity to revise and improve their written expression.

b) The nature of most class sessions is highly interactive, with instructor/class discussions and small groups exchanges dominating, rather than lectures.

c) These skills are promoted as outlined elsewhere in this application (see following section, for instance).

(3) There are a number of goals of the GE Program (see instructions). Which will your course will promote?

Language is intertwined with culture in its many manifestations, allowing us to say that culture courses offered by the modern language department address to one degree or another many of the goals listed. In particular:

Students will acquire knowledge of western culture and it relationship to non-western cultures.

French courses deal primarily with western culture but involve examination of non-western cultures as well, because French is spoken by native speakers of the language throughout the world on all continents, especially in Africa and Asia. French courses are all Francophone courses, meaning that they treat French as used outside France. This course gives an exposure to non-European (African and Asian) cultures that are heavily influenced by former French colonization and it explores some aspects of decolonization.

Students will acquire knowledge of the unity and diversity of humanity

This course delves deeply into multiple aspects of French society—itself largely multicultural at this point.

Students will acquire dispositions to form opinions and modify positions based on evidence

Constant confrontation with different ways of expressing the same idea or problem, different cultural biases, different approaches to the same problem do much to encourage the use of evidence in forming opinions. Using films as a medium to cultural enquiries also encourages and supports checking the facts presented as a story with background information.

(4) Describe how your course meets the relevant course objectives for the chosen area (these can be found in the middle column of the General Education Plan on pages 6 – 21).

Explain and analyze various components of culture and show how these components interact;

The careful selection of films allows coverage of major areas of French culture, for example major historical events, regional differences, intergenerational relationships, education, identity. This course shows elements of French and Francophone cultures through representation in a cultural artifact (films) and demonstrates how age, gender, regional, professional, and cultural differences appear in a different cultural system.
Examine American culture in relationship to other countries’ similar and dissimilar systems;
Film is an ideal medium to help students compare French and American cultures, in particular by examining French films and their American remakes (and there are several of those).

The introduction to the course includes comparison between American and French films on similar or identical topics in order to have students confront the target culture(s) with their own, helping them to see their native culture with more distance and from other perspectives.

Require students to read texts and engage in writing that totals at least 1500 words
Students are asked to produce a 300-word structured essay on each film and to select a few (3 or 4) to include in their final portfolio, along with a reflexive introductory essay: 10 essays of 300 words = 3000 word (plus portfolio additions)

(5) Describe the types of activities and assignments students will complete to demonstrate the relevant desired student learning outcomes (e.g. in-class discussion, reflection paper, homework assignments, exam, etc). In other words, how will you be assessing students’ competencies in the relevant learning outcomes?

• Describe the kinds of issues, opportunities, and challenges brought about by increasing globalization;

Students will be able to discuss changes within French economy and social structures, and connect post-colonial situations in metropolitan France today to colonial enterprises of the early 20th century (Essay 4, 5 OR 6, and/or portfolio)

• Explain interactions of cultures and how those interactions may have shaped modern society;

Students will be able to present and discuss reciprocal influence of post-Revolutionary France and America (Essay 10 and/or Portfolio)

• Describe and begin to evaluate their own cultural perspectives and biases;

Students will have multiple occasions to present and discuss their views and opinions on various cultural behaviors (family relationships, unusual couples, art and cultural appreciation, gender and ethnic prejudices) and compare them with French representations offered in films. (Reflexive essay in portfolio)