

Rationale for the Social Science Core Requirement

The Social Sciences are an integral part of the mission of the College of Liberal Arts and Sciences at Villanova University. The College seeks to provide “an atmosphere of responsible learning to a varied group of students who will be called to intellectual, moral, and professional leadership. To fulfill these goals, the College seeks to promote intellectual curiosity and rigor within the University; to instill the fundamentals of critical insight, mature judgment, and independent thinking in its students; and to awaken in its students a sense of the importance of values and the moral responsibility of caring for others and working for the betterment of society.”

In the Social Sciences, which stand at the intersection of science and the humanities, students and faculty grapple with the enduring questions and problems facing human behavior and society. The distinguishing characteristic of social science is a rigorous and scientific approach to the study of social issues through the employment of qualitative and quantitative research methods representative of the particular social science discipline being studied. Courses that satisfy the core social science requirement are designed to provide students with an appreciation of the scientific approach to addressing social and behavioral questions and with the analytic and evaluative skills to do so. Thus, core social science courses provide students with the scientific tools to understand the factors and processes affecting human behavior, to confront and solve social problems, and to appreciate the implications of human interaction, action, and inaction.

As part of the core curriculum, core social science courses emphasize continued development of critical thinking skills and the ability to communicate ideas effectively. They foster critical understanding of human action and of interaction with other humans and their environment. They help students learn to infer and generalize principles about the world and to apply these inferences appropriately. They give students the opportunity to recognize and appreciate diverse perspectives on complex situations, and they may employ interdisciplinary approaches. They teach students to evaluate sources of evidence, to establish causal relations or to determine other types of relations between facts. They equip students with the ability to evaluate conflicting points of view and conflicting evidence, and to learn to make judgments based on their analysis.

Criteria for Social Science Core Courses

A course that satisfies the Social Science Core requirement must have, as its main focus, a rigorous scientific approach to the study of social or behavioral issues based on appropriate qualitative and quantitative research methods. Such a course may do one or more of the following:

- Provide students with an understanding of human behavior and society from a scientific perspective, enabling them to appreciate the relevance of science to their own lives and to contemporary social issues and problems.
- Help students develop a broad knowledge and awareness of human culture through the scientific study of cultural elements in different cultural contexts.
- Provide a scientific analysis of the principles of behavior and social relations within and between species, including the implications for understanding human behavior and society.
- Explore applications based on scientific principles and research, including their impact on attempts to solve social and/or behavioral problems.

- Introduce students to the scientific methodologies or forms of analysis that are used to expand knowledge in the social science discipline being studied. Students may gain an understanding of how such methodologies are integrally related to the nature of the questions being asked and the answers being sought.

Approved by the Social Science Core Curriculum Subcommittee, February 24, 2014.