

General Education Courses – Description and Skills

Institutions can use existing general education courses to introduce and have students practice the core skills needed to effectively work in teams. Below are examples of courses and departments at Indiana University of Pennsylvania that 1) relate necessary skills to key foundational material and 2) can count toward a student's 120-credits necessary for graduation.

Introduction to Theatre: Interpersonal Practices This course explores the theatre arts, its major conceptual and aesthetic underpinnings, theatre history, selected works of dramatic literature, and acting, directing, design, and technical theatre. Class experiences include analysis of at least two major works of drama, attending two live productions, and viewing selected televised plays and musicals. Students analyze interpersonal relations of teams using dramatic literature and implement primary acting and directing tools to discover solutions to challenges in interpersonal relations.

Skills Practiced: flexibility, perseverance, non-verbal communication, empathy/perspective taking, trust, active listening, and collaboration.

Rationale: Institutions could choose other courses, like psychology, to introduce and have students practice the assigned skills. Our freshman Introduction to Theatre is a Fine Arts general education requirement and uses improvisation and fundamentals of performance to incorporate practice of the chosen interpersonal skills. Students reflect on empathy and perspective, non-verbal communication, and perceptions of flexibility and perseverance. Projects surrounding planning and employing performances allow students to practice key skills and think about how they contribute to collaboration.

Foundations of Sociology: Social Relations in Groups and Organizations This course studies the structure of societies and the behaviors of individuals, groups, and teams. The relationships between individual and societal institutions, and interactions are examined, with emphasis on power and status. Individual identities and team dynamics, as pertains to race, gender, class, sexuality, ability, and age, are explored, using the methods and research findings of sociologists. Small teams apply decision making and problem solving, to achieve an objective within a larger organizational context.

Skills Practiced: personal and social responsibility, appreciation for diversity, physical and psychological health, negotiation, assertive communication, adaptive learning, and conflict resolution.

Rationale: The interpersonal skills assigned to this freshman course align well with the core content of sociology. Assignments include assignments for students to delve deeper into inclusion of members, negotiation, and conflict resolution with peer feedback on perceived abilities. This course counts toward two general education requirements, the social science and global and multicultural awareness general education requirements.

Teamwork and Communication Skills for College and Career This course develops teamwork and communication skills for presenting career-oriented, technically rich information. It applies foundational theories of communication and the rhetoric of public communication and uses that understanding to present research, data, and technical information orally and in written form. Students learn to engage audiences, frame and present arguments, and present their topic and its significance in technical and non-technical settings. It prepares students to produce appropriate media to supplement their presentations.

Skills Practiced: self-evaluation and monitoring, assertive communication, information and communications technology literacy, written communication, coordination, interpersonal skills, verbal communication, and productivity.

Rationale: The sophomore course provides ample projects for students to develop their interprofessional skills while practicing presenting scientific and non-scientific arguments in both oral and written forms. Student members use peer feedback to reflect on perceived productivity and ability to communicate information. Students can use this course to count towards their communication general education requirement.

Organization Leadership Theory This course introduces leadership by focusing on what it means to be a good leader and exploring the practice and interplay of leadership with effective teamwork and communication. It examines the nature of leadership, modern leadership theories, leadership/team traits, leadership/team skills, vision, setting the tone, listening to team and out-group members, handling conflict, overcoming obstacles, and ethics in leadership. Special attention is given to helping students understand and improve their own leadership performance.

Skills Practiced: adaptability, reasoning/argumentation, decision making, team monitoring and evaluation, situational leadership, team leadership, and productivity.

Rationale: To be an effective team member, students learn the foundations of leadership and their connections to teamwork. Styles of leadership depend on the organization, project, decision making, and team members. The class focuses on situational leadership to enable team members to share leadership roles when the time/project necessitates. Students identify types of situational leadership based on team member adaptability, productivity, and team monitoring and evaluation. The course, housed in the Management Department, uses case studies and course projects to foster discussion and peer reflections/reflection. Organizational Leadership Theory, a junior course, is not used as a general education requirement but can count as a student's free elective.

Teamwork and Leadership Capstone This senior course explores leadership through reflection and analysis of learning experiences within the minor. It emphasizes development of students' philosophies of leadership through self-reflection, peer-to-peer dialogue, and development of a life-long learning individual development plan with specific attention to interpersonal dynamics, communication, analyzing leadership styles, ethics, task vs. relationship behaviors, overcoming obstacles, diversity strengths, conflict management, leadership for change, individual strengths and weaknesses, establishing a constructive climate, and reflective development of personal leadership and team member skills.

Rationale: The senior capstone course has students reflect on their four-year process of learning and practicing interpersonal skills, teamwork, and leadership abilities. The activities transition from learning and applying skills to marketing them to potential future employers by means of resumes, portfolios, presentations, and mock interviews.

A Note on Global Skills

Of the skills that we have included in the minor, there are six global skills that are mapped to individual core courses that explicitly introduces and teaches the skill; however, all courses assess all six. To enhance a student's interprofessional skills, the following skills were chosen and tracked throughout the four-year minor: conflict resolution; productivity; verbal communication; team leadership; critical thinking; and collaboration. These skills are assessed in at least one of the assessment tools for every course.