

Portuguese 331

Portuguese Culture and Society

How this course meets the general principles of the GEC Model Curriculum and the specific goals of the category(ies) for which it is being proposed

(From Model Curriculum)

ARTS AND HUMANITIES

Humanistic inquiry is most often pursued through the study of what are commonly called the humanities and the arts. The humanities, according to a definition accepted by the National Endowment, are “fields of study and branches of learning which record, investigate, analyze, and evaluate the products of human imagination, activity, and culture.” This broad definition is meant to include the history and criticism of the arts. To it must be added production of all forms of artistic expression and the capacity to understand and judge them aesthetically and in cultural context. Humanistic inquiry assesses, across temporal, cultural, or theoretical divisions, how humans view themselves in relation to other humans, to nature, to the divine; what questions they ask about important concerns; and how they express their responses to the conditions of their existence. Language, memory, and symbol are central to the study of both the humanities and the arts. Both also ask questions about the values by which individuals and societies live and the tolerance and mutual understanding needed to allow the full realization of human potential and diversity. Therein they cultivate an appreciation for the unique, particular, and distinctive, for the dated and the placed, often focusing on “tradition” as well as on the intangible aspects of human activity and on the ability of individuals to push against constraints. Therefore, the continuing forms by which humans communicate with, advise, and entertain one another are important, but equally so are those individuals and moments through which new possibilities are opened for the human experience.

The overall goal of this component is to develop knowledge of the humanities and the arts and a humanistic perspective that fosters capacities for: (1) aesthetic and historical response and judgment; (2) interpretation and evaluation; (3) critical listening, reading, seeing, thinking, and writing; and (4) experiencing the arts and reflecting on that experience. As a result of meeting this requirement, each student should have studied significant writings and works of art that can be shown to be of lasting and fundamental importance for humanistic inquiry.

→ This course addresses the core goals of the GEC’s Arts and Humanities Breadth category. The topics studied in the course will explore cultural and artistic expressions of the Portuguese people, and their profound, but often under-appreciated influence on and interconnections with other Western and non-Western societies. Indeed, the course will recognize early on the importance of Portuguese maritime expansion preceding, and making possible, Columbus’s voyages. The course will also take into close account the continuing global importance of the cultures of the Portuguese-speaking world, evidenced, for example, by the fact that Portuguese is the 6th or 7th most spoken language in the world.

→ In addition to fostering appreciation for aesthetic and appreciation and understanding of Portuguese society, the course will aim to provide students with a variety of interdisciplinary topics to help them to acquire a broad and deeper understanding of other contemporary world nations still connected historically, politically, and culturally by the Portuguese language.

→ This course will foster all of the mentioned capacities, as students will be asked not only to acquire knowledge about cultural expressions, but also to look at culture critically and in context. They will evaluate the aesthetic qualities of the cultural artifacts that they are exposed to, but also interpret their significance within the relevant historical context. This will be practiced through pre-discussion study and writing exercises, in-class discussions, term papers, and group presentations.