

Research and Creative Inquiry Course Inventory

Overview

The GE allows students to take a single, 4+ credit course to satisfy a particular GE Theme requirement if that course includes key practices that are recognized as integrative and high impact. Courses seeking one of these designations need to provide a completed Integrative Practices Inventory at the time of course submission. This will be evaluated with the rest of the course materials (syllabus, Theme Course submission document, etc). Approved Integrative Practices courses will need to participate in assessment both for their Theme category and for their integrative practice.

Please enter text in the boxes below to describe how your class will meet the expectations of Research and Creative Inquiry courses. It may be helpful to consult with the OSU Office of Undergraduate Research and Creative Inquiry. You may also want to consult your Director of Undergraduate Studies or appropriate support staff person as you complete this Inventory and submit your course.

Please use language that is clear and concise and that colleagues outside of your discipline will be able to follow. You are encouraged to refer specifically to the syllabus submitted for the course, since the reviewers will also have that document. Because this document will be used in the course review and approval process, you should be *as specific as possible*, listing concrete activities, specific theories, names of scholars, titles of textbooks etc.

Accessibility

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Pedagogical Practices for Research and Creative Inquiry Courses

Course subject & number

Religious Studies 4370

Undergraduate research is defined by the Council on Undergraduate Research (CUR) as an inquiry or investigation conducted by an undergraduate student that makes an *original* intellectual or *creative* contribution to the discipline. Undergraduate creative activity is the parallel to research, engaging in a rigorous creative process using (inter)disciplinary methods to produce new work.

In the context of the 4-credit GEN Theme High Impact Practice (which, by definition, is a more robust course than a non-HIP 3-credit Theme course—since student will take one 4-credit course instead of taking two 3-credit courses), research or creative inquiry requires a level of rigor and engagement that goes beyond what is routinely already included in a 3-credit Theme course in that discipline. It will generally mean that students are either (1) instructed in and engage in original research and the production and/or analysis of new understanding or data used in the preparation of a final paper, report, or project characteristic of the discipline, *or* (2) they are instructed in and engage in the primary production and performance or display of new creative work characteristic of the discipline.

Further comments and clarifications:

- The Creative Inquiry or Research component should be integrated throughout a *substantial* portion of the course (not just at the very end, for example).
- The Creative Inquiry or Research component should connect to the Theme and to the subject/content of the course. If the course at hand is requesting two Themes, then the research component or creative work should fully pertain to both Themes.

1. Disciplinary expectations and norms: Different disciplines at the university define original research and creative inquiry differently. Please explain what the expectations/norms of your discipline are for original research or creative inquiry. How is new understanding developed in your field? How does the creative process amplify knowledge in the field? (This information should also be readily visible on the syllabus.)

In the discipline of Religious Studies, original research and creative inquiry can take multiple forms. It can include, for example, archival research on primary texts from a particular religious tradition, historical analysis of the development of a particular religious movement, or an immersive ethnographic study of a particular religious community. New understanding is developed by a critical reading of past scholarship, rigorous use of theoretical and methodological tools in our field, and exploration of new bodies of textual, historical and/or ethnographic materials. RELSTDS 4370 will focus primarily on ethnographic research methods, training students in the primary tools used to study living religions, with immersive site visits to several religious communities in central Ohio. The creative process in this course will involve the critical reading of theoretical and methodological approaches used in the academic study of religion and the application of these approaches to the study of religious diversity in Ohio. Students will also be trained in the skills of interviewing, sensory ethnography, digital ethnography and participant-observation, using these tools to produce a final creative research project on religious life in our region.

In terms of content, written assignments, and field research outside of class, the course will be significantly more rigorous and demanding than a 3-credit course in Religious Studies. The amount and level of the readings will be much higher than a typical 3-credit class, and the site visits and final project will require a major investment of non-classroom time on the part of both the students and the instructor.

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2. Teaching methods and practices: Which class activities and materials will be used to teach students the research methodology and/or research practices or the methods and practices of creative inquiry typical or relevant in your discipline? How will the potential ethical implications for research or creative inquiry in the field be addressed in the course? (This information should also be readily visible on the syllabus.)

The course will involve a number of specific class activities to teach the research methods and practices relevant to the academic study of religion. These will include: 1) close reading and discussion of texts such as Steven Engler and Michael Stausberg's Handbook of Research Methods in the Study of Religion, Sarah Pink's Doing Sensory Ethnography, and numerous scholarly articles; 2) an interview exercise in which students will practice their skills by interviewing other students in the class; 3) three site visits (led by the instructor) to religious communities in central Ohio; 4) detailed field notes based on at least two of the site visits; and 5) a final collaborative research project in which students will work together in groups to explore a specific topic relating religious diversity in Ohio. Throughout, students will have opportunities to discuss and reflect on the ethical stakes and implications of their work.

Students will be trained in a variety of research methodologies, such as ethnography, auto-ethnography, and participant-observation; sensory ethnography and digital ethnography; and interviews and oral histories. They will then be asked to use these tools in an active way through their interviews, site visits, and collaborative research project. The project will focus on a particular theme relating to religion in Ohio such as: education, work life, gender/sexuality, race/ethnicity, media representation, assimilation/multiculturalism, diversity/pluralism, generational change, or the "American Dream." Final projects will consist of a public-facing resource, such as a web page or fact sheet, meant to educate citizens of Ohio about the selected theme/community.

3. Implementing: Through which class activities and materials will the students be given opportunities to practice disciplinary research or creative inquiry techniques, methods, and skills to create new knowledge or advance praxis? (This information should also be readily visible on the syllabus.)

Several of these activities will offer students the opportunity to practice disciplinary research and creative inquiry techniques and methods. The practice interview and two guided sites visits will be a direct implementation of the skills they've acquired in class, allowing them to see how different research methods they've discussed work in specific contexts. Finally, the collaborative research project will bring together everything they've discussed throughout the semester in a larger piece of creative work that will explore the complex role of religion in central Ohio. In the final project they will be asked to examine a specific theme or topic, such as education, work life, gender/ sexuality/ race/ ethnicity, media representation, assimilation/multiculturalism, diversity/ pluralism, generational change, or the "American Dream." Final projects will consist of a public-facing resource, such as a web page or fact sheet, meant to educate citizens of Ohio about the selected theme/community. The semester will culminate with a final public forum, in which students will share their work with community partners and celebrate their success.

In sum, the course will not only involve a higher level of reading and discussion than a 3-credit course. It will also require extensive work outside of the classroom and the development of an original research project and public resource that is intended to be useful a broad general audience beyond the university.

4. Demonstration of competence: Disciplines develop and share new knowledge or creative work in different ways. Through which activity or activities will students first be taught and then be involved in a demonstration of competence in an appropriate format for the discipline (e.g., a significant public communication of research, display of creative work, or community scholarship celebration)? The form and standard should approximate those used professionally in the field. (This information should also be readily visible on the syllabus.)

Students will demonstrate their competence in the discipline of religious studies in several ways. First, they will be asked to write two sets of field notes based on site visits to local communities, where they will be able to put the skills acquired in class into practice. These will involve a thick ethnographic description of the site and a rigorous analysis using methodological tools discussed in class. For each of these papers, students should focus their observations on a different theme, such as worship practice, leadership/authority, gender, race, material culture, or generational differences.

Secondly and most importantly, students will demonstrate their competence through the final collaborative research project. Students will work in small groups to produce a major project that explores the ways in which different religious communities have adapted to the social and political landscape of our region and how they have influenced and shaped that landscape in turn. Final projects will consist of a public-facing resource, such as a web page or fact sheet, meant to educate citizens of Ohio about the selected theme/ community. The semester will culminate with a final public forum, in which students will share their work with community partners and celebrate their success.

5. Scaffolding and mentoring: Explain how the creative inquiry or research project will be scaffolded across multiple assignments or one large project broken up across the course (e.g., specific explanations about reviewing literature, developing methods, collecting data, interpreting or developing a concept or idea into a full-fledged production or artistic work). Each pertinent assignment should help students build and demonstrate skills contributing to the larger project. Meaningful feedback and mentoring should be provided by the instructor at regular intervals to inform next steps in the process. (This information should also be readily visible on the syllabus.)

The final collaborative research project will be scaffolded across multiple assignments and developed under the guidance of the professor throughout the semester. The practice interview, site visits, and field notes will all help build toward the final project, providing students with the basic practical tools to complete the final project. The readings will also offer critical theoretical perspectives on questions of religious diversity, citizenship, identity, and the various ways that scholars of religious studies approach these issues. As explained in the syllabus, the final project will be developed in specific stages with the help of the professor, including the following stages: creating a project proposal; putting together an annotated bibliography; posting field notes based on site visits; writing a preliminary draft; producing a revised draft in light of feedback from the instructor; and finally, a presentation in a public forum.

6. Reflection: Explain how the course offers students opportunities for reflection on their own developing skills and their status as learners and as researchers or creatives. (This information should also be readily visible on the syllabus.)

The course will offer students multiple opportunities to reflect on their own developing skills. The most obvious of these will be the two “letters to the professor,” one written at the beginning and one written at the end of the semester. These letters will offer opportunities for students to reflect on how the course fits with their own personal and professional goals and to assess their own development and growth over the course of the semester.

In addition, students will be asked to reflect on their skills as they work on the final collaborative research project. As explained above, the project will be developed in multiple stages, at each of which the instructor will provide feedback and offer opportunities for revision. The final public presentation of the project will also allow students a chance to reflect on what they’ve learned in light of feedback from their fellow students and from community members.

