GE Theme course submission worksheet: Lived Environments

Overview

Courses in the GE Themes aim to provide students with opportunities to explore big picture ideas and problems within the specific practice and expertise of a discipline or department. Although many Theme courses serve within disciplinary majors or minors, by requesting inclusion in the General Education, programs are committing to the incorporation of the goals of the focal theme and the success and participation of students from outside of their program.

Each category of the GE has specific learning goals and Expected Learning Outcomes (ELOs) that connect to the big picture goals of the program. ELOs describe the knowledge or skills students should have by the end of the course. Courses in the GE Themes must meet the ELOs common for **all** GE Themes and those specific to the Theme, in addition to any ELOs the instructor has developed specific to that course. All courses in the GE must indicate that they are part of the GE and include the Goals and ELOs of their GE category on their syllabus.

The prompts in this form elicit information about how this course meets the expectations of the GE Themes. The form will be reviewed by a group of content experts (the Theme Advisory) and by a group of curriculum experts (the Theme Panel), with the latter having responsibility for the ELOs and Goals common to all themes (those things that make a course appropriate for the GE Themes) and the former having responsibility for the ELOs and Goals specific to the topic of **this** Theme.

# Briefly describe how this course connects to or exemplifies the concept of this Theme (Lived Environments)

In a sentence or two, explain how this class “fits’ within the focal Theme. This will help reviewers understand the intended frame of reference for the course-specific activities described below.

This course explore knowledge sharing and information sharing communities as the develop on social media. Social media applications have become and will continue to evolve as online lived environments where many individuals spend more than half their day.

# Connect this course to the Goals and ELOs shared by *all* Themes

Below are the Goals and ELOs common to all Themes. In the accompanying table, for each ELO, describe the activities (discussions, readings, lectures, assignments) that provide opportunities for students to achieve those outcomes. The answer should be concise and use language accessible to colleagues outside of the submitting department or discipline. The specifics of the activities matter—listing “readings” without a reference to the topic of those readings will not allow the reviewers to understand how the ELO will be met. However, the panel evaluating the fit of the course to the Theme will review this form in conjunction with the syllabus, so if readings, lecture/discussion topics, or other specifics are provided on the syllabus, it is not necessary to reiterate them within this form. The ELOs are expected to vary in their “coverage” in terms of number of activities or emphasis within the course. Examples from successful courses are shared on the next page.

**Goal 1:** Successful students will analyze an important topic or idea at a more advanced and in-depth level than the foundations. In this context, “advanced” refers to courses that are e.g., synthetic, rely on research or cutting-edge findings, or deeply engage with the subject matter, among other possibilities.

**Goal 2:** Successful students will integrate approaches to the theme by making connections to out-ofclassroom experiences with academic knowledge or across disciplines and/or to work they have done in previous classes and that they anticipate doing in future.

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|  | Course activities and assignments to meet these ELOs |
| **ELO 1.1** Engage in critical and logical thinking. | This course is unique in that it offers students experience with abductive logic (most critical and logical thinking in university courses is deductive and/or inductive). Abductive logic will become increasingly important as we move deeper into the information age and individuals will have more responsibility to vet and gauge competing information and information sources. In the Online Community through Social Media course students will be tasked with comparing not only different platforms and different types of platforms, but different information universes (open information sources vs. TOR/Dark Web Sources). They will recognize the danger in easily accepting and adopting information from any source and the need to compare the legitimacy and viability of the information they find online for use in their everyday lives.(Assignments Weeks 5.6. 10) |
| **ELO 1.2** Engage in an advanced, in-depth, scholarly exploration of the topic or ideas within this theme. | Students will engage in careful exploration of social media phenomena and its role as an important environment for obtaining information, building knowledge and community in a society increasingly dominated by digital tools. By understanding the ways in which online community and social media emerged, initially separately and then merging together for both positive and nihilistic purposes they will develop a deeper understanding of what it means to be an active participant in an online community, including the possibilities but also the dangers of spending time in the live environment created social media, and the ways they themselves help to create and recreated these environments making them (many times too) comfortable for some and dangerous shared spaces for other. As far back as 1991 Howard Rheingold pointed to the ways society is going to have to re-evaluate and in some ways re-invent the ways we interact with each other in dynamic information ecologies, creating new forms of community. Students will be able to develop a better idea of what the new rules and boundaries of these new digital lived environments means to them and the world around them. |
| **ELO 2.1** Identify, describe, and synthesize approaches or experiences. | Students explore this topic through both academic articles, online group work and active engagement with social media platforms/applications.  Readings for this course represent both classic and cutting-edge writings on online communities and social media and it means to live in a continuous space-place dialectic. For example, reading Howard Rheingold's book on the beginnings of virtual communities allows them to understand the predictions Rheingold made about the coming information age and grapple with why so many of the predictions of coming danger about the ways we live with each other came to fruition.  Group Work: Students will form and actively use their own small communities online (4-8 students) offering them first-hand experience of possibilities and limitations of using different online platforms and the importance of setting norms, both universal and local, in the interests of community development.  Engagement with social media platforms/applications: Students will explore social media platforms creating their own mini-lived environment, understanding first-hand consequences of decisions they maken and offering a very different perspective/understanding of what their online activities mean, and how they can be used for different purposes. |
| **ELO 2.2** Demonstrate a developing sense of self as a learner through reflection, self assessment, and creative work, building on prior experiences to respond to new and challenging contexts. | Students will be asked to use social media in relation to real world contexts where they need to figure out ways to turn their online communities into productive, problem-solving spaces. In week 13 for instance their assignment is developing an approach using online social media to solve an OSU campus problem. Their final project revolves around developing a workable, sustainable online community. These assignments are not only reflections of the class but can and should be extended out to their use of educational online tools such as discussion boards (recognizing that they only really work if there is a way to turn posts and comments into a sustainable community). |

*Example responses for proposals within “Citizenship” (from Sociology 3200, Comm 2850, French 2803):*

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| ***ELO 1.1*** *Engage in critical and logical thinking.* | *This course will build skills needed to engage in critical and logical thinking about immigration and immigration related policy through:*  *Weekly reading response papers which require the students to synthesize and critically evaluate cutting-edge scholarship on immigration;*  *Engagement in class-based discussion and debates on immigration-related topics using evidence-based logical reasoning to evaluate policy positions; Completion of an assignment which build skills in analyzing empirical data on immigration (Assignment #1)* |

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|  | *Completion 3 assignments which build skills in connecting individual experiences with broader population-based patterns (Assignments #1, #2, #3)*  *Completion of 3 quizzes in which students demonstrate comprehension of the course readings and materials.* |
| ***ELO 2.1*** *Identify, describe, and synthesize approaches or experiences.* | *Students engage in advanced exploration of each module topic through a combination of lectures, readings, and discussions.*    *Lecture*  *Course materials come from a variety of sources to help students engage in the relationship between media and citizenship at an advanced level. Each of the 12 modules has 3-4 lectures that contain information from both peer-reviewed and popular sources. Additionally, each module has at least one guest lecture from an expert in that topic to increase students’ access to people with expertise in a variety of areas.*    *Reading*  *The textbook for this course provides background information on each topic and corresponds to the lectures. Students also take some control over their own learning by choosing at least one peer-reviewed article and at least one newspaper article from outside the class materials to read and include in their weekly discussion posts.*    *Discussions*  *Students do weekly discussions and are given flexibility in their topic choices in order to allow them to take some control over their education. They are also asked to provide*  *information from sources they’ve found outside the lecture materials. In this way, they are able to*  *explore areas of particular interest to them and practice the skills they will need to gather information about current events, analyze this information, and communicate it with others.*    *Activity Example: Civility impacts citizenship behaviors in many ways. Students are asked to choose a TED talk from a provided list (or choose another speech of their interest) and summarize and evaluate what it says about the relationship between civility and citizenship. Examples of Ted Talks on the list include Steven Petrow on the difference between being polite and being civil, Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie’s talk on how a single story can perpetuate stereotypes, and Claire Wardle’s talk on how diversity can enhance citizenship.* |
| ***ELO 2.2*** *Demonstrate a developing sense of self as a learner through reflection, self-assessment, and creative work, building on prior experiences to respond to new and challenging contexts.* | *Students will conduct research on a specific event or site in Paris not already discussed in depth in class. Students will submit a 300-word abstract of their topic and a bibliography of at least five reputable academic and mainstream sources. At the end of the semester they will submit a 5-page research paper and present their findings in a 10-minute oral and visual presentation in a small-group setting in Zoom.*    *Some examples of events and sites:*  *The Paris Commune, an 1871 socialist uprising violently squelched by conservative forces* |
|  | *Jazz-Age Montmartre, where a small community of African-Americans– including actress and singer Josephine Baker, who was just inducted into the French Pantheon–settled and worked after World War I.*  *The Vélodrome d’hiver Roundup, 16-17 July 1942, when 13,000 Jews were rounded up by Paris police before being sent to concentration camps The Marais, a vibrant Paris neighborhood inhabited over the centuries by aristocrats, then Jews, then the LGBTQ+ community, among other groups.* |

# Goals and ELOs unique to Lived Environments

Below are the Goals and ELOs specific to this Theme. As above, in the accompanying Table, for each ELO, describe the activities (discussions, readings, lectures, assignments) that provide opportunities for students to achieve those outcomes. The answer should be concise and use language accessible to colleagues outside of the submitting department or discipline. The ELOs are expected to vary in their “coverage” in terms of number of activities or emphasis within the course. Examples from successful courses are shared on the next page.

**GOAL 3:** Successful students will explore a range of perspectives on the interactions and impacts between humans and one or more types of environment (e.g. agricultural, built, cultural, economic, intellectual, natural) in which humans live.

**GOAL 4:** Successful students will analyze a variety of perceptions, representations and/or discourses about environments and humans within them.

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|  | Course activities and assignments to meet these ELOs |
| **ELO 3.1** Engage with the complexity and uncertainty of human environment interactions. | Goal 3, in describing interactions between humans and environment does not use online environments, in particular online communities, often time built through social media applications, as an example. This is not surprising, because even as we spend more and more of our “lives” online we rarely referred to the cyber-“spaces” as being our lived environments. In this course we will focus on both the unique qualities of sites/applications where online communities emerge and the responsibilities (e.g., moderation) and dangers (e.g., misinformation, nihilistic group activities) emerge. The course started by explaining the concept of cyberspace as related to the original ideas of cybernetics: that what is different about these online environments are continuous (often non-hierarchical) feedback loops. We also explore the idea of these environments, and why people are so drawn to them, as third (convivial) spaces that are fast disappearing in the material world. We then go on to explore the agency (and responsibilities) of the user in this type of environment and how individual interactions between the user and these lived spaces can create both productive and destructive communities/goal structures, often times with those participating not realizing it. |
| **ELO 3.2** Describe examples of human interaction with and impact on environmental change and transformation over time and across space. | The course describes examples of the ways human interaction changed online environments. In the case of protest for example these online lived environments enabled oppressed populations to create new types of agency through access to non-hierarchical discussion and information sharing. Twitter, before it became X, became a new type of agentic environment through Black Twitter, leading eventually to being an integral part of the George Floyd protests. These environments also became important environments for young protestors in Brazil, creating opportunities for transformations in everyday life that had not been possible before. The course also focuses on the fragility of these environments, and how because boundaries are decided by users, they can become negative and nihilistic. Examples used in the course include Gamergate and the Fappening, and the ways aggressive users turned gaming discussion board into misogynistic, intimidating spaces of discussion that do very real damage across the online material worlds. There is also a discussion of the fine lines involved in these living contexts, for instance TOR (infrastructure used for what has been termed the dark web) where users can much more easily engage in criminal, dangerous activity, but also providing a place for individuals who themselves are in danger (abused spouses, people engaged in pushing back against corrupt regimes) can exchange information without fear. |
| **ELO 4.1** Analyze how humans’ interactions with their environments shape or have shaped attitudes, beliefs, values and behaviors. | This is probably where the course is most focused. The course explores that way the lived environments of online spaces are created and recreated through feedback loops, and how these shape “attitudes, beliefs, values and behaviors.” This begins in a general sense with exploration and contrast of the cathedral and bazaar models of information building and knowledge sharing. That top down and non-hierarchical approaches for organizing community by themselves define living environments. There is a discussion of how information itself creates a living environment, how misinformation and echo chambers recreates out living in the world (e.g., how online forums, communities led to changes in vaccination attitudes and acceptability of certain types of literature). How these spaces can be controlled by governments, corporations or users through moderation, censorship or in certain circumstances ratioing. |
| **ELO 4.2** Describe how humans perceive and represent the environments with which they interact. | This is directly related to 4.1 (of course). There will be explorations of they users choose certain environments and why they leave them. How the perception of the platform affects individuals’ choices to spend time there, to add to the community, to believe the information created, promoted, distributed by the community. The students will get a hands on understanding of the interplay between perception and participation in communities in their final project as they design their own communities, their own definitions of online communities as lived environments, deciding on levels and types of moderation, barriers to entry and participation (do you need to be invited, do you need something like “karma” to post), the role sometimes necessary but sometimes dangerous technologies such as bots. |
| **ELO 4.3** Analyze and critique conventions, theories, and ideologies that influence discourses around environments. | By the end of this course students will be able to talk intelligently about the types and impacts of communities created through social media. There is a great deal of societally promoted discourse about living (spending too much time) on social media, that it is mentally unhealthy, that is causes polarization. Little of this has been proven and it is extremely important that individuals have a clear eyed understanding of what social media means in our society, its possibilities and its dangers, as they will become the guardian of our social discourse and what it means to our institutions, democratic and otherwise, going forward. |