

Existing Interdisciplinary Courses

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Interdisciplinary work is a significant part of the undergraduate program at Tufts, and exists in various graduate programs as well. The senior honors thesis, in particular, is required to be interdisciplinary, though in practice for classics students this often means no more than asking a literary scholar from another department to serve as third reader.

Some departments and programs are naturally interdisciplinary, either by the nature of their subject (like classics, or any other area studies or period studies program), or because of the way the department here has constituted itself (for example, sociology and anthropology). In other cases, individual courses cross disciplinary boundaries. In what follows, I will list courses that appear to have an interdisciplinary focus, with particular attention to those that could appropriately be cross-listed or “adopted” into the classics department. The list is limited to arts and sciences departments, excluding engineering; although engineering, like any applied science field, is arguably interdisciplinary by definition, courses about engineering in the classical world seem more appropriately treated as history of science.

It should be noted that this is a survey of courses offered for undergraduates. As a result, the topics and methods listed here are not the same as the research fields or preferred methods of the faculty. Certainly we all occasionally teach courses based directly on our scholarly work, but collectively we must also teach the core areas of our fields (whether that is Latin grammar, calculus, or a survey of American history). I assume that many — perhaps most — faculty also sometimes teach courses rather far from their own work, for their own stimulation or to ensure that necessary topics are offered on schedule; an example in our field might be a Greek historian teaching Latin literature. We should not therefore assume that large numbers of our colleagues are doing interdisciplinary *scholarship* simply because we can observe interdisciplinary *courses*.

Sources for this study include the Bulletin and Course Descriptions, the web sites of the various departments and programs, and recent course schedules from SIS On Line.

Classical courses

These courses already include a classical unit or focus, or may do so depending on who is teaching them in any given semester.

Art History

Because of the strength of the department in medieval art, there are many courses which overlap what our department teaches.

FAH 1, “Art, Ritual, and Culture,” includes a section on the arts of the classical cultures. We already accept this as a related course for our majors.

FAH 20, “Image and Icon: Medieval Illuminated Manuscripts,” covers Europe, Byzantium, Jerusalem, and Armenia.

FAH 23, “Art and Politics of the Middle Ages,” is clearly interdisciplinary; as we regularly teach medieval Latin, the Middle Ages seem to be part of our purview.

FAH 29, “Gender and Medieval Art and Literature.” Again, this is an intrinsically cross-disciplinary course. It is already cross-listed with German; if relevant materials include Latin literature, then it fits into our work as well.

FAH 119, “The Classical Tradition in Medieval Art,” has a title which speaks for itself, but it has not been offered in two years.

Comparative Religion

Although the title of the department is *Comparative Religion*, the courses it offers generally treat one religion at a time; only the introductory courses seem to take a comparative approach. Several courses, mostly cross-listed in Art history, treat religion and art; occasional courses treat religion and film. Arguably, CR 35, “Intellectual History of Christianity,” CR 22, “Introduction to the New Testament,” and CR 34, “The Church Through the Centuries,” may contain classical material and could be cross-listed. The latter two, along with CR 52, “Judaism Through the Centuries,” are already on our approved related courses list.

Drama

We regularly cross-list our ancient drama courses with this department. Other theater history courses, such as DR 1, “Comedy and Tragedy,” or DR 137, “Theater and Society: Prehistory to the Renaissance,” may also touch upon classical theater. The department is also strong in gender studies.

Education

As we’ve discussed, ED 125, “Curriculum and Practice of Teaching: Latin and Classical Humanities,” could usefully be cross-listed as a classics course.

All the methods courses, numbers 120 to 129, are at some level interdisciplinary; so, perhaps, are the various curriculum courses, such as ED 110, "History and Political Science/Political Philosophy Curricula," and similarly for other subjects.

English

EN 32, "The Epic Strain," discusses epic as genre, and includes Homer and Virgil as possible authors. It could be productive to co-ordinate this course with our own CLS 140 on epic. EN 116, "Mapping London," is a historical and geographical survey. EN 126, "Empire and Counterculture: British Literature, 1860-1900," also has a strong historical component. EN 160, "Environmental Justice and U.S. Literature," is at least as much concerned with environmental studies and with peace and justice studies as with literature in the strict sense. In general the English department could be a productive model for courses based in literary sources but exploring wider concerns.

History

Our history courses are normally cross-listed in this department. Courses in social history or in intellectual history can take interdisciplinary approaches. There are many such courses; the following list is not exhaustive.

HIST 3, the introductory special topics number, can include "Culture and Sexuality in Early Modern Europe." Other HIST 3 topics may also focus on social or intellectual history, or on the periods and areas where our department also works.

HIST 22, "Renaissance and Reformation," is explicitly about society and culture in the early modern period.

HIST 68, "The World of Islam," cross-listed in Comparative Religion, necessarily deals with intersections between religion and politics; HIST 69, "Medieval Islamic History," will also deal with social history.

American social history is the topic of HIST 85, "America in the World," and HIST 86, "Modern American Society."

HIST 103, "Consumption, Power, and Identity," calls itself a "socioeconomic history," a relatively rare focus among history and economics courses here.

History also offers an environmentally focused course, HIST 102, "Time, Nature, and Humanity."

Aside from cross-listed classics courses, however, the history department does not seem to deal with the ancient world; there are a few courses on the Middle Ages and the Byzantine Empire which, though not necessarily interdisciplinary, are relevant to our work and are accepted as related field courses for our majors. These include HIST 20 and 21, the sequence on Europe in the Middle Ages, HIST 113, "The Religious and Spiritual Map of Europe, 300 - 1500," and HIST 115, "The Byzantine Empire."

Mathematics

This year MATH 7, “Mathematics in Antiquity,” has received its own course number. In the past it has been offered as a “topics” course (MATH 10). The most important material here, at least from the perspective of modern mathematics, is Greek. The higher-level historical course, MATH 112, “Topics in the History of Mathematics,” may also cover the mathematics of the classical world. There is a natural connection here which we have not exploited to date.

The strong introductory program in the mathematics department is largely interdisciplinary. The popular MATH 9, “Mathematics of Social Choice,” is relevant to political science, and MATH 8, “Symmetry,” includes material from the visual arts. These courses, along with MATH 6, “Finite Mathematics,” are designed for humanities and social science students who may be intimidated or bored by calculus. Such students will never become mathematics majors and indeed will probably not take any more mathematics courses than they are required to. The mathematics department does a good job of serving these students, giving them a positive view of a subject they are inclined to dislike, while not sacrificing rigor. Although there is no distribution requirement driving students into the classics department, so our students have all chosen to be in our courses, we may be able to glean useful ideas from these interdisciplinary, introductory mathematics courses for our own introductory courses.

Philosophy

Although philosophy courses are generally not interdisciplinary in any significant way, several of them include classical material, which may be read from a point of view rather different from the one a classics course might take. Clear examples include PHIL 1, “Introduction to Philosophy,” and PHIL 151, “Ancient Philosophy” (last offered in Spring 2005), which is cross-listed in classics.

Political Science

The main classical course in this department is PS 45, “Western Political Thought,” cross-listed in both classics and philosophy. PS 141, “Shakespeare’s Rome,” reads English and Latin literature from a political point of view; this is also cross-listed. Other courses in the department use texts and methods from history, economics, or sociology.

Other interdisciplinary work

American Studies

The lower-numbered courses, AS 12-20, have been variously titled “Introduction to American Studies” or “Introduction to Interdisciplinary Studies.” The latter title appeared in the bulletin as of 2003-2004, but no longer exists. The senior capstone course is an integrative seminar also intended to use interdisciplinary methods. Because this is arguably an “area studies” program, it is not surprising that it includes cross-listed courses from a variety of other departments.

Anthropology

Many of the courses listed in anthropology are interdisciplinary in focus or methods. Aside from those already cross-listed as archaeology, the one most likely to be relevant to classics is ANTH 160, “Linguistic Anthropology,” most recently offered in spring 2005.

Biology

Several biology courses have social science components, notably BIO 2, “Biology and the American Social Contract,” BIO 7, “Environmental Biology,” BIO 10, “Plants and Humanity,” the upper-level environmental courses cross listed in Environmental Sciences, and BIO 97, “Contemporary Biosocial Problems in America.” The last of these is particularly interesting for its strong ethics component: this is one of very few courses in biology that explicitly deals with subjects that “belong” to the humanities.

Chemistry

Like the biology department, the chemistry department offers an environmental science course, CHEM 8, “Environmental Chemistry.” The most intriguing interdisciplinary course in this department, however, is CHEM 170, “Scientific Writing.”

Child Development

Courses in child development often combine education, psychology, or philosophy. Some, such as CD 157, “Theories of Spiritual Development,” CD 176, “Children’s Literature,” or CD 179, “Child Art,” draw on material from other areas.

Community Health

This program is interdisciplinary by design, drawing on biology, political science, and sociology. Our CLS 146, “Ancient Medicine,” is cross-listed in this program.

Economics

Courses in this department often look beyond pure economic theory to its applications in other fields, notably EC 25, “Economics of Health,” EC 30, “Environmental Economics and Policy,” EC 138, “Economics of Food and Nutrition Policy,” and EC 144, “Income Inequality, Poverty, and Economic Justice.” A course like EC 100, “History of Economic Ideas,” might make meaningful use of classical materials; it has not been offered in several years, however. A course on ancient economies would be natural.

Judaic Studies

These courses intersect with religion, literature, history, and film studies.

Modern languages

The various modern language departments regularly offer courses about film, concerned with literature, language, and film studies. Other courses consider society in general, for example FR 45, “Development of French Society as Seen in Comedy and Satire” (not offered recently), or GER 44, “Shaping Identity: Social and Political Perspectives of Writers and Artists on Germany.” There are several courses in the German program, taught in English, that cover German history or art, though with a primary emphasis on literature and literary culture, and similarly for Spanish, Russian, and other languages.

Nutrition

Although the Friedman School is not part of Arts and Sciences, its courses are open to undergraduates, even those listed as 200-level courses (with the instructor’s permission). Several of these are interdisciplinary, such as NUTR 201, “Communicating Health Information to Diverse Audiences,” or NUTR 225, “Management, Planning, and Control of Nutrition and Health Programs and Organizations.”

Peace and Justice Studies

Like other interdisciplinary major programs, Peace and Justice Studies offers an integrative senior seminar, PJS 190. Many courses are cross-listed

between PJS and other fields, notably education, sociology, and political science.

Physics

PHY 6, “Physics for Humanists,” treats physics within society. A more conventional cross-disciplinary course is PHY 25, “Introduction to Medical and Biological Physics.” The catalog lists an intriguing project, PHY 5, “The Nuclear Age: Its Physics and History,” a full-year course to be team-taught by a physicist and a historian and cross-listed in the two departments. It has not been offered in the past three years, however.

Psychology

Courses such as PSY 58, “Psychology of Sport,” and PSY 80, “Psychology of Music,” are or may be interdisciplinary. The department also has a course in the history of psychology, PSY 125.

Sociology

Because of the general interdisciplinary perspective of the sociology and anthropology department, many of these courses cross disciplinary boundaries. The focus, however, is on contemporary societies; it appears that there are no sociology courses with significant classical content.

Urban and Environmental Policy and Planning

This is another intrinsically interdisciplinary area and, like Nutrition, a graduate-only program in which undergraduates may take courses with permission. These courses span economics, writing, economics, sociology, political science, law, and environmental science.

Observations

This survey of other Arts and Sciences departments’ courses raises several questions and prompts several suggestions.

In recent discussions of departmental strategy, we have defined our work temporally and geographically, as the study of the ancient Mediterranean. Although this is certainly the core of any classics program, neither of these limits is an absolute boundary: our courses include post-ancient literature and language (for example, medieval Latin, or later heroic tales in the popular “Journey of the Hero” course), and they include cultures far from the Mediterranean Sea (for example the Celts, China, and India). Some of us also reach beyond the ancient Mediterranean in our scholarship. It would be natural to strengthen our offerings in Medieval Studies,

co-ordinating with Art History, English, History, and other relevant departments. We might also want to co-ordinate our study of more distant areas with the modern language departments (and the ExCollege, where Hindi presently lives) and the History department.

It is remarkable how few courses are offered with “the classical tradition” in their titles or in their syllabi. This can be a very popular entrée into the classical world; it is also interdisciplinary in a small way, crossing the boundaries of various national literary or artistic traditions. Such courses naturally invite cross listing. For example, consider a course on Early Modern tragedies in which students would read Racine, Dryden, and Seneca; such a course could be cross-listed under French, English, and Classics. It might even be team-taught by members of these departments, or, if it is housed specifically in classics, specialists from French or English could be invited as guest speakers. We could begin offering such courses immediately, if we wanted to.

It is also remarkable that there is no systematic program in comparative literature at Tufts. International Letters and Visual Studies is similar, but seems primarily focused on film studies. Because the English and modern language departments have a strong literary theory orientation, it is surprising that comparative literature has not grown up here, given how much of current work in the field is strongly informed by theory. Although most of the literary scholars in our own department seem uninterested in theory, it is something our graduate students should be aware of and should be able to use intelligently. Moreover, as scholars of classical literature are always trained in two language and two cultures, comparative work in the classics has a long pedigree, both in classics proper (here I am thinking of for example Clausen’s seminal paper “Callimachus and Latin Poetry,” *GRBS* 5 (1964) 181-196) and in the classical tradition (where a representative example is Hightet’s 1949 book). If we thought there might be interest among the other language and literature departments, classics could usefully lead the establishment of such a program.

One common thread that runs through the work of several departments is environmental studies. There is a growing body of scholarship on ecology in the ancient world (e.g. Hughes, *Pan’s Travail*, Johns Hopkins: 1994; Sonnabend, *Mensch und Landschaft in der Antike*, J.B. Metzler: 1999; Jeskins, *The Environment and the Classical World*, Bristol: 1998). We might therefore be able to capitalize on this evident interest, perhaps forming useful collaborations.

The Chemistry department touts its American Chemical Society certification. Like Classics, Chemistry offers several different undergraduate major tracks; one, certified by the ACS, is intended for students planning to become chemists. The general chemistry major requires one fewer course and allows some choice among upper-level electives. Could something like this work in classics? That is, could departments reach consensus on one or more “APA certified” undergraduate program definitions in classics? Graduate departments would know what they could expect of success-

ful graduates of such a program. Our students would be able to distinguish among the track intended to prepare them for graduate school, the track for prospective secondary teachers, and the track for general liberal arts education, something that right now requires detailed conversations with the student's advisor. Since we already have a large variety of major tracks, we might be well suited to lead this discussion, perhaps starting through CANE. This, of course, is a topic rather beyond a single department's survey of its own work.