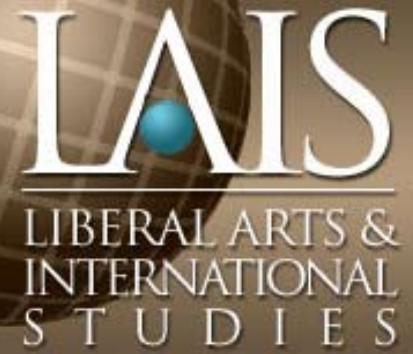




SYGN 200: Human Systems



Background

“Human Systems”, is a sophomore-level course for all undergraduates intended to meet the breadth requirement. It is offered during the Fall and Spring semesters in large lecture format. Also, it is often offered during the Field or Summer sessions. When “Human Systems” was created, it followed historical approaches of analyzing contemporary world issues and relating them to future modern day patterns and challenges that scientists and engineers are likely to face after they graduate.

COURSE DESCRIPTION

This course traces the evolution of political, economic, and social institutions since the 16th century. It focuses on interactions and evolution of “human systems” or institutions and practices that have shaped today’s human societies and their behaviours with particular emphasis on the history of modern world systems. This course promotes awareness of historical, political, social, and economic processes and provides students with experience in analyzing critical issues of the contemporary world.

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

- Knowledge and understanding of international historical evolution in the modern era of social, political, economic, and cultural systems.
- Critical awareness of the contemporary state of major systems and institutions.
- Critical awareness of globalization, its opportunities and drawbacks, and how it influences and is influenced by major contemporary international institutions.
- Critical thinking skills.
- Writing skills of analyzing, interpreting, evaluating, and arguing.

Jon A. Leydens

Associate Professor and Writing Program Administrator

jleydens@mines.edu

YEARS
2006-2009

INFORMATION SOURCE	CONCERNS	RESPONSE/S	EFFECT/S
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Students' comments in class and during office hours. • Faculty members' classroom observations and classroom experiences. • Essays which students write. • Student evaluations (every instructor, every semester). • Teaching assistants sometimes provide useful data from their interactions with students. A few TAs have sat in the course for the second time, and hence, have a good grasp of what the course is all about and how it is managed. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Some students complain about the length of readings, and have difficulty reading one of the text books (Landes). Some students were unsure about what they need to know for the test. • Faculty concurred with students that writing is a pedagogically superior method than multiple choice exams. • Students do not read as widely as those in humanities and social sciences. • Increasing frequencies of plagiarism from each other or from the internet. • Current size of 150 students is too large; smaller sections will be ideal, but CSM finances do not permit hiring more professors for the course. • Two faculty used Castells' book: Power and Identity as a second textbook which covers modern perspectives on globalization. Students found the book hard to read. • Grades are too concentrated: one third for each test is too high. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Faculty are increasingly making the case that students who understand the evolution and workings of modern world socio-economic works will make them more effective in their careers which are increasingly global. • We have maintained one common text, while each professor chooses his/her own supplementary readings to reflect the "globalization" themes. Some use a single book; others use a combination of a book(s) and a series of articles from journals, and video materials. This approach has been successful in keeping the course content current and exciting but at the same time allows individual professors to reflect their expertise on the subject matter. • The heavy teaching load is dealt with by posting lecture slides on the web. • Some faculty adjusted their style of lectures to highlight select key issues or concepts that students must know. 	

INFORMATION SOURCE	CONCERNS	RESPONSE/S	EFFECT/S
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Some faculty gives brief pop quizzes that cover recently-discussed ideas and concepts. This rewards attendance, gives students a clear idea about the kinds of issues that they should focus on, and a sampling of what to • To help students prepare for tests, some faculty started to give study questions. They cover list of key themes and concepts that the student must know. • Before major tests, some faculty spend up to one hour to review the key points. • Some faculty also give a one page essay in a mixed form of test (essay, multiple choice, and identifications). • We maintained the take-home essay which is worth roughly a third of the course. • One faculty will introduce a fourth test so to spread the grades a bit more. 	