Feedback Report

UCA Core Council Assessment sub-committee

February 2020

Re: Review of LD Core Diversity Course Offerings

Thank you for providing the information requested by the sub-committee. The assessment sub-committee is diligently reviewing all courses in the Lower Division Core that assess under the Diversity Core competency in order to assure that our students are receiving a shared, common experience across the university as regards this Core competency. Your participation is greatly appreciated in this endeavor. The sub-committee would like to provide you with this feedback report. If you have questions, concerns, or comments please direct those to, Jake Held (jmheld@uca.edu)

Course Prefix and Number: ECON 2310

Course Title: Global Environment of Business

**Syllabus**: Any syllabus for a course in the UCA Core must include language indicating the courses relative position within the UCA Core. The boilerplate language can be located here: <http://uca.edu/academicaffairs/publications-information/>

The course syllabi provided did have the required language.

**Lower Division Core standards:** Does 50% of the course content directly align to the Core outcomes for the goal under with the course assesses? (NB: This is calculated by considering course objectives, readings, lecture/discussion, and assignments as indicated by the course syllabus and provided work.)

ECON 2310 is categorized under Goal B (Other) of the Diversity competency. The outcomes for Goal B are:

**Cultural Worldview Frameworks**: The history, values, politics, communication styles, economics, or beliefs and practices by which people construe their experiences and make sense of the world around them.

**Curiosity**: Willingness to understand and engage with other worldview frameworks.

**Application**: Ability to engage and learn from different perspectives and experiences; to understand how one’s place in the world both informs and limits one’s knowledge.

The full rubric can be located here: <http://uca.edu/core/assessment/>

As a lower division Core course, this course ought to provide students with a foundational experience to begin developing the skills indicated by the outcomes under the rubric. In order to provide such an experience it is necessary that students be consistently exposed to these ideas and offered multiple opportunities to develop these skills.

I will begin this report simply saying “Thank you.” The committee was quite grateful for the openness of you and your instructors. You provided a wealth of materials, over 200 pages, all said and done, which offered a thorough view of the content of the course and demonstrated a commitment to align to and support the learning outcomes under Rubric B of the Diversity competency. For that, we are grateful. However, after reviewing all of the materials, the committee found that although ECON 2310 offers students frequent opportunities throughout the semester to be introduced to issues related to diverse cultures, on the whole the course fails to engage the Core outcomes substantially. This decision was reached after much conversation, the gist of which I will try to communicate below.

Diversity, as a Core competency, is defined as: the ability to analyze familiar cultural assumptions in the context of the world’s diverse values, traditions, and belief systems as well as to analyze the major ideas, techniques, and processes that inform creative works within different cultural and historical contexts. The committee notes that crucial components of this definition are engaging the world’s diverse systems as well as approaching different cultural and historical frameworks. In addition, the review of this proposal encouraged the committee to reaffirm what it means to teach to diversity.

If one considers the history of the development and adoption of the UCA Core competencies, the intention was always to promote a learning experience that developed a student’s intellectual capacities according to those areas deemed most relevant and crucial for engagement and success in contemporary society, from effective communication to diversity. With this in mind, the diversity component is truly oriented towards facilitating an openness to alternative and diverse frameworks from which to view and engage the world, a check on the epistemic hubris that naturally develops in an insular community. Thus, the diversity outcomes are about promoting a broadening of one’s epistemic worldview by means of exposure to and encouraged receptivity towards diverse worldviews. What this means for the review in question is that the committee had to ask whether the engagements with diverse cultures or worldviews in ECON 2310 facilitated this curiosity and openness, or did they simply indicate or point out the existence of diversity without using that experience to broaden a student’s perspective. That is, is diversity addressed as a simple fact, namely, that different cultures exist and one needs to be aware of that as one moves through the global community, or is the fact of diversity used to encourage criticism and questioning of one’s own cultural experiences and practices so that the student is provided a chance to learn from diverse systems. As applied to ECON 2310, the question was fundamentally about whether diverse cultures and worldviews were presented in their own right, as alternative frameworks for engaging the world, thus providing a bona fide experience consistent with the rubric, or were they introduced simply as something to be responded to from the student’s own value system, taken as legitimate in itself and beyond reproach.

For ECON 2310, as regards engagement across all three of the Diversity outcomes, Cultural World Frameworks, Curiosity, and Application, we saw engagement with Cultural World Frameworks throughout the course. However, with respect to the Curiosity and Application outcomes, which anticipate engagement in terms of asking questions and demonstrating a desire to learn about and from diverse cultures, the committee did not see evidence of significant opportunities for student development. The course as a whole seemed intentionally aligned to the area, but student engagement with diverse cultures beyond the rote demonstration of knowledge of discrete cultural facts was lacking. The committee recognizes and appreciates that the course is primarily a business course that integrates diversity into its business curriculum, and thus it is not in its essence a diversity course, per se, and we noted efforts to integrate material related to diverse cultures and worldviews throughout, but the level of engagement was limited.

It should be noted that the T-Shirt book and accompanying assignment was seen as a good opportunity to offer the kinds of engagement we would look for and hope all students had an opportunity to engage in, but that it seemed to fall short in terms of fostering a deeper engagement with diversity. For example, of the prompts provided, most focused on simple supply chain issues, and only one of the 4 asked the student to understand the cultural and historical conditions related to production. In addition, the majority of the quiz or exam questions indicated as addressing diversity asked for superficial identification of concepts, and most of the remaining questions dealt with basic business concepts such as entrepreneurism, markets, and distribution of resources. Yet students were not encouraged to engage and learn from alternative viewpoints or worldviews. The material seemed to indicate that our (contemporary American late-capitalism) worldview was the standard against which we judge or respond to alternatives, without engaging or appreciating alternative cultures in their own right and as valuable alternatives, or even providing fodder for thought about the merits of our own system. However, this is readily resolvable. Given the nature of the content of the course, at least as apparent from textbook table of contents and syllabi, students could be encouraged and prompted to engage in a deeper, more meaningful way, with diverse cultural systems. For example, the essay prompts could ask students to demonstrate their curiosity about production and cultural factors by asking about alternative modes of production, whether (or rather, how) globalization threatens endemic cultures, and how we ought to respond? One could address the effect of global capitalism and economic forces on indigenous peoples and ways of life, noting for example issues pertaining to environmental degradation, exploitation, the ways in which we benefit economically from relationships with human rights abusers (China), egalitarian critiques of late-capitalism, alternative social and economic structures of distribution such as agrarian societies, socialist societies and so forth.

One of the main observations of the committee dealt with, perhaps, a “meta” level issue regarding the place of ECON 2310 in the Core as diversity. Namely, as a business course, ECON 2310 will, and should, educate students about the cultural, economic, and moral norms of our own economic and political system. But engagements with diverse cultures will then be limited insofar as they will be additional elements of study and dealt with in relation or response to norms endemic to our own culture. Thus, there is a seeming tension in the course between teaching those skills and traditions necessary to be literate and functional in our cultural milieu as members of a global economy as US citizens and actors, and respect for and appreciation of diverse cultures in their own right.

**Committee Recommendation**: Having come to the determination that as presented ECON 2310 falls short of adequately engaging the Application and Curiosity outcomes of the Diversity rubric, we request an assurance argument for ECON 2310 demonstrating a commitment to the student learning outcomes of the Diversity Goal B rubric. Things to consider:

 Specific recommendations:

1. Greater that 50% of course content needs to explicitly align to the outcomes under Diversity (Goal B – Other). Use the table in Curriculum Attachment A here:<http://uca.edu/core/forms/> as a guide. In addition, provide course materials such as copies of assignments, quizzes, tests, writing assignment prompts, and/or detailed syllabus. Consider specifically *types of engagement* and whether they speak to the outcomes under the rubric, most notably Curiosity and Application.
2. Course assignments needs to align to Core outcomes, and specifically prompt and require that students engage in activities that assist in developing these competencies. More specific and directed prompts could readily refashion extant course work into exemplary forms of engagement across the outcomes.
3. In order to better understand Core requirements and respond to the sub-committee’s requests it is recommended that the department consult with a member of the sub-committee in regard to this report before, or while, revising its submission. Your college representative on the sub-committee is Stephanie Watson (Steve Nelson, proxy). Of course, Dr. Held, Assistant Provost for Academic Assessment and General Education, is always readily available as well.

Should you choose to submit revised materials for ECON 2310, those materials should be collected into a single pdf file and submitted directly to Jacob Held. The course materials will be evaluated by the UCA Core Council curriculum review sub-committee. The sub-committee will review the materials and make a recommendation to the UCA Core Council as to whether or not they are adequate in addressing the concerns noted above. Should the sub-committee affirm that they are adequate and the Core Council affirm that assessment, no further action will be necessary. Should, however, the sub-committee deem the revised materials to be insufficient and the Core Council affirm this evaluation, or the sub-committee deem the materials sufficient yet the UCA Core Council reject this assessment, the Core Council’s decision will be guiding. In the event of either of these previous two outcomes, you will have one semester to revisit the issues and revise the course materials. The same process will then be followed with the subsequent decision of the Core Council being final.

If you should fail to act on this recommendation by July 1, 2020, ECON 2310 will be placed on probationary status for Fall 2020. If no progress is made in rectifying matters by the close of Fall 2020, ECON 2310 will be removed from the LD Core beginning Spring 2021.

If you have any questions or concerns please contact Jake Held (jmheld@uca.edu)