**January 25, 2013**

**WORKING DRAFT**

**LEARNING GOALS FOR SOCIAL SCIENCES ONLINE DEGREE COMPLETION PROGRAM**

**Integration**

**Theory**

**Disciplinary Breadth and Depth**

**Research Inquiry**

**Critical Thinking**

**Communication**

**Thematics**

Integration of Multiple Frameworks: Capacity to employ varied lenses and frameworks, through: awareness of multiple perspectives; capacity to evaluate social issues from varied perspectives; and capacity to integrate perspectives across disciplines and issues/problems. Accomplishment of this goal is based on a foundation of disciplinary breadth and depth across the social sciences.

Theory and concepts: Awareness of key social science concepts and relationships among them; ability to evaluate information sources; understand the nature of social knowledge, including its historical, spatial contexts.

* Familiarity with important social science concepts, awareness of potential links and connections among concepts, and facility in abstract reasoning about concepts.
* Ability to identify and evaluate information sources and existing scholarship relevant to research questions.
* Ability to effectively evaluate and critique materials, including understanding the difference between empirically-based evidence and opinion.
* Understand how shared systems of thought relate to patterns of social action and other social phenomena.
* Ability to bring normative and ethical perspectives to the understanding of social phenomena.
* Understand the tentative nature of social knowledge; appreciate ambiguity and multiplicity.
* Ability to bring historical perspective to the understanding of complex social phenomena in both the past and the present.
* Ability to understand and practice spatial scale: ways in which local, regional, national, and global practices intersect.

Research methods and inquiry: Capacity to pose social science questions and design research to address them, including knowledge of and ability to use multiple social scientific methods and awareness of their advantages and disadvantages.

* Ability to pose important social science questions and create research designs appropriate to addressing these questions.
* Awareness of and ability to use a variety of social scientific methods, including both qualitative and quantitative approaches, as well as understanding of what these approaches do and do not offer to various types of social scientific questions.
* Ability to recognize and appreciate the distinctions among levels of analysis, from the individual to the societal.
* Demonstrate an understanding of ethical issues and guidelines for conducting social science research.

Critical thinking: Ability to construct and defend arguments about social phenomena, and to evaluate the merits of multiple perspectives on these phenomena.

* Ability to construct and defend an argument based on interpretation of research findings.
* Ability to assess different, possibly competing, worldviews.
* Demonstrate awareness of and appreciation for multiple perspectives on social issues.
* Capacity for self-reflexivity about one’s own participation in the creation, exchange, and reception of information and meaning.

Communication and engagement: Development of interpersonal communication skills in multiple modalities (oral, written, visual) and for multiple audiences.

* Development of strong interpersonal communication skills, oral, written, and visual.
* Demonstrate communication literacy through recognition of the influences of social context and institutions, mass media and other communication technologies, language in all its forms.
* Ability to exercise collaboration skills in working in learning groups.
* Ability to understand and integrate relationships among scholarship and research on the one hand, and community and context, on the other.
* Ability to understand and to practice active citizenship, locally and/or globally.

Social Science Themes of Inquiry: Awareness of several key areas of inquiry that are considered critical to the social sciences.

*Societal inequalities*: Demonstrate knowledge of differences, such as those associated with intersecting class, gender, and racial positions in cross-cultural and cross-national contexts, and the power dynamics associated with these differences, as well as their social and historical contexts.

*Information and technological society*: Develop knowledge and critical assessment of the issues associated with the exponentially increasing availability of information and multiple technologies that shape communication possibilities.

*Global justice*: Develop awareness of the global dimensions of societal inequalities and both historical and contemporary efforts to achieve social justice, as well as global interdependencies of these efforts.

*Population dynamics and movements (migration,reproduction, aging*): Demonstrate knowledge about population parameters, including descriptions of population density, shifts from one type of locale (rural) to others (urban), population movements from some locales to others, and the political, economic, geographic, cultural factors associated with these locations and shifts.

*Societies and environments:* Demonstrate knowledge about the social dimensions of the environmental challenges facing human populations and all forms of life, as well as strategies of human and global sustainability.

*Social contexts of health:* Understand systems of health and illness, the social factors that promote health or cause illness, and the local and global dimensions and interdependencies of these systems.

*Conflict and cooperation:* Demonstrate knowledge of those social factors that create social conflicts and those social factors that promote cooperation and peace.