

General Education Senior Seminar Course
One credit hour
University 4xx

Rationale: In their first years at UND, students take classes from a wide array of subject areas and work towards a wide variety of cross-disciplinary skill goals and content area learning goals. As they move into the major, their exposure to ideas, materials, conversations, and goals beyond those of the discipline often becomes limited. The intent of the GE Senior Seminar is to provide all students with an integrative, interdisciplinary one-credit experience that invites them to think more broadly. These courses are intended to be populated by students from more varied backgrounds than will have been the case with major courses, providing students with a final broadening or bridging experience prior to graduation.

Course description: Senior Seminar courses may include content from any field of study. In order to remain accessible to students from across disciplines, Senior Seminar courses do not have pre-requisites or co-requisites. However, content of the courses is at an advanced level in terms of intellectual skills and breadth of knowledge assumed. Students in these courses will build on the skills and knowledge acquired through general education, but at a higher level, while working toward the advanced educational aims described in UND's mission statement. Repeatable for up to two credits toward graduation requirements.

Student eligibility for Senior Seminar courses: Students must have accumulated at least 100 credit hours and be within 25 hours of degree completion in order to enroll in a Senior Seminar course. The single exception is a student who may intend to be off-campus for an internship or other credit-bearing academic activity during one or more of his/her final semesters at UND. Such a student shall be allowed to enroll in a Senior Seminar course upon signed permission from the dean's office.

Sample course topics: Senior Seminars will typically be organized around one or two books (or other "texts" – which can include visual texts, aural texts, "live" texts out in the public world, or other sorts of materials) of interest to educated persons. These texts may be on any topic, with the following serving only as examples of the range of topics that might be addressed:

- Understanding Men and Women
- Change for the Common Good
- Biodiversity Conservation
- Folklore in Modern Life
- The Mathematics of Rationality
- The Contemporary American Experience
- Contemplative Practice and Civic Engagement

Pedagogical expectations: As in any seminar, student engagement in consideration of the texts and topics is of paramount importance. These courses engage students in conversation, often providing students with opportunities to lead course discussion.

Students read, write, think, and converse during class periods; student grades are based on the intellectual quality of these efforts and engagement with required class activities.

Course validation: For validation or revalidation for general education status, faculty in Senior Seminar courses must demonstrate:

- that the course builds on skills and knowledge introduced in the lower division general education requirements;
- that the course is intellectually demanding at a level appropriate for a senior level course;
- that planned pedagogy is appropriate, as described above, for a seminar course;
- that the seminar has a faculty-student ratio that is workable and appropriate for seminar-style teaching;
- that the instructor is purposeful about assessing student learning in terms of general education and/or institutional outcomes (as described in UND's mission statement).

Thoughts about implementation:

1. We suggest that students be barred from enrolling in sections closely linked to their own majors; e.g., a section of the seminar that is planned around a "text" that is heavily historical might exclude History majors.
2. There would be wonderful opportunities created if several faculty taught Senior Seminar sections using the same text. One approach would be for a committee to select several texts of likely contemporary interest each year and then recruit faculty to teach them – in which case it would be useful to provide one "getting started" meeting prior to the semester when users of a common text could, if they so chose, participate together in brainstorming and collaborative planning (continuing to converse via e-mail, if desired). However, we are not recommending that a short list of text options be enforced, and we anticipate that some faculty will prefer to propose their own texts and work independently.
3. It might be desirable to list titles/topics for individual sections without listing faculty names. Doing so would discourage students from selecting sections based on previous familiarity with specific faculty and encourage more broadly cross-disciplinary groupings of students.
4. We did not specify a class size limitation other than to describe a pedagogy with the intent that proposed courses would need to have class sizes appropriate for seminar-style pedagogy. For planning purposes, we recommend assuming an average class size of about 20 students per section (suggesting that for about 2000 seniors graduating each year, e.g., about 100 sections would need to be available over the course of the year – with some offered each semester). Some faculty might have very creative ways of working with larger numbers of students, and we recommend that the GE Committee approve such course proposals as long as the proposal is consistent with the intent of the seminar.