


## Undergraduate Curriculum Review Process for New Programs

 Manage Participants Profile (uwcr)

Seattle: Online Bachelor of Arts degree in Integrated Social Sciences (ISS-20131008)

<b>uwcr</b> uwcr	Posted Jan 15, 2014 9:04 AM
Board member	<p>Please review the attached 1503 pdf requesting to establish an online Bachelor of Arts in Integrated Social Sciences at the Seattle campus and post comments by 5:00 pm on Wednesday, February 5th.</p> <p>Due to the size of the proposal some of the appendixes have not been uploaded. The attached proposal is the information FCAS felt was the most applicable to the Tri-Campus Review. If you would like the additional documentation please send and email to <a href="mailto:uwcr@uw.edu">uwcr@uw.edu</a> (<a href="mailto:uwcr@uw.edu">mailto:uwcr@uw.edu</a>).</p> <p>If you have any problems viewing the attachment or need disability accommodations, please contact the University Curriculum Office at <a href="mailto:uwcr@uw.edu">uwcr@uw.edu</a> (<a href="mailto:uwcr@uw.edu">mailto:uwcr@uw.edu</a>).</p> <p>Attachments</p> <div data-bbox="470 661 714 703">  ISS-20131008.pdf 12 KB  <a href="#">Download</a> <a href="#">View</a> </div>
<b>gmobus</b> GEORGE MOBUS	New! Posted Jan 15, 2014 12:26 PM
<b>Jerelyn</b> JERELYN A. RESNICK	New! Posted Jan 16, 2014 11:27 AM
<b>denver</b> WALTER C PARKER	Last Posted Jan 26, 2014 12:05 PM Edited Jan 29, 2014 10:12 AM by denver

This is likely not on anyone's radar screen, but it turns out that "limits to growth" phenomena are affecting all seven thematic areas in multifarious (integrated) ways. Has anyone considered the applicability of subjects like biophysical economics to these areas (Hall & Klitgaard, "Energy and the Wealth of Nations", Springer, New York). Imagine an outer circle encompassing the star formation labeled "Biophysical Reality". Sustainability is an ill-defined concept so a lot of assumptions should probably be reexamined in light of that fact.

I didn't see any information about increased resources being dedicated to library services. These vital academic support services are already being stretched very thinly across all three campuses. What will be the impact of this new degree on these services if there are no increased resources?

Staffing for the courses will be provided by tenure line faculty and lecturers. Will the lecturers be hired through a competitive process so they can be given multi-year contracts? It would be a detriment to the stability of the new degree to have some of the faculty hired only on a contingent yearly or quarterly basis.

Congratulations to the developers of this online social science major. The curriculum structure is impressive—complex, thoughtful, and coherent; big accomplishments. And the three integrative mechanisms are compelling, especially in combination with the target students and three "institutional interests." Altogether a high-quality proposal with good values. I offer only a few comments, mainly about core content and reading.

Appendix A gives helpful details. The core course ISS 301 is rich, and the readings are arguably powerful (assuming the assignments are particular selections from these texts). Williams' *New Keywords* models so well for students how to think about a concept. But I worry about core courses 350 and 355 due to their distance from any established academic discipline/tradition. No one has studied this much; consequently, who has the expertise to teach them? The listed texts may be too broad to be powerful. Peter Elbow's article, "The Pedagogy of the Bamboozled" (1973), might fruitfully be paired with Freire's book, and hopefully a good argument can ensue. Lave and Wenger's books are too specialized and not quite pertinent, are they? Perhaps more practical and relevant (to the student's portfolio) might be Zinsser's *On Writing Well* (especially the chapters on Simplicity, Clutter, Audience, and Writing About Yourself) and Wilensky's *Learning to Divide the World*, which theorizes the formation of the social sciences and other school subjects.

In any course, core or otherwise, content selection is the central intellectual challenge for the faculty. What small sample of topics from a universe of possibilities will be selected (and then sequenced and paced) for teaching and learning? A faculty member's expertise is the best resource, although experts are notorious for overstuffing a course (they don't yet understand their subject well enough to simplify it). A related challenge is text selection: Which few and powerful texts deserve close reading? I suggest that close reading of a limited number of powerful texts be featured in this curriculum, with students sharing their interpretations with one another and the professor challenging them. I would give 'close reading' a formal place in the curriculum structure.

I wondered at Education's absence as a thematic area or otherwise. It is itself an integrated and applied social science field. In any society, schooling is a major social institution that draws more public resources than any other save, sometimes, military and police/prisons. And, the school is a talisman: Societies everywhere try to fix social problems by reforming the school. A study of the school

curriculum is one of the most reliable avenues to a society's values and aspirations— what it considers 'must-knows', its beloved narratives (e.g., "a nation of immigrants") and how it has divided phenomena into school subjects. Consider the social sciences in U.S. high schools: History definitively won the battle for curriculum space, long ago and in three containers: national (11<sup>th</sup> grade), world (10<sup>th</sup>), and state (varies, usually junior high). Rarely is geography taught any more in high school except, curiously, for the AP Human Geography course (which is *required* at the high school nearest the Seattle UW campus). US Government remains a popular elective for seniors. *Federalism*, a 'keyword' here, helps us understand the 15,000 or so ministries of education that govern the public school curriculum in the U.S.—school districts. Moreover, schools in the U.S. have been hugely commodified in recent decades. They are asked to promote equality while preserving privilege, and to solve problems they didn't create (e.g., poverty). Teachers everywhere, like priests and social workers, embark on a mission of human improvement. They are granted tremendous status in Japan, deified almost, and denied even dignity in the U.S. This is a rich stew, worthy of study, e.g., Zimmerman's *Whose America? Culture Wars in the Public Schools*, Labaree's *Someone Has to Fail*, Cohen's *Teaching and Its Predicaments*, Bissinger's *Friday Night Lights*, Delpl's *Other People's Children*, Darling-Hammond's *The Flat World and Education*, Cremin's *The Transformation of the School: Progressivism in American Education 1876-1957*.

Walter Parker

**gutturp**  
PETER GUTTORP

New Post 3 Jan 16, 2014 9:48 AM

I am concerned with the lack of quantitative methodological courses in the program. This does not compare well to current social science degrees. Furthermore, I get the impression that the program is built on existing online courses. From my experience, these have generally been developed with little input and oversight from the corresponding academic department (that is certainly the case for STAT 311). Thus, the quality of online offerings tends to be very uneven.

Peter Gutturp  
Statistics, Quantitative Ecology and Resource Management, Urban Design and Planning

**lingding**  
LING DING

New Post 3 Jan 16, 2014 10:30 AM

A very thorough and data-based investigation is given in this proposal. This is a good program for those students who cannot attend classes in persons. Will the "online" be reflected on their diploma? How to guarantee the outcomes of online teaching? Is the online program competeable to the current social science program? If yes, why should students come to campus in persons? If no, what's the meaning of the online program?

**june**  
JUNE G MORITA

New Post 3 Jan 16, 2014 2:52 PM

This proposed ISS program seems to be lacking rigor, especially with respect to quantitative reasoning, which is critical for the ability to "analyze and evaluate data"(page 44), and to "explain social scientific research in terms of questions, theories, methods and findings" (pages 6 and 22 and of the ISS proposal).

The designers of this program should think beyond just the thematic areas to ensure students gain the important written and oral communication and quantitative skills that are needed to meet the stated goals related to "career relevance and employability"(page 43). The program should include requirements that focus on these skills. In particular, a required course that focuses on quantitative reasoning and understanding of what one can and cannot infer from data must be included in the program. Through a joint effort between the Departments of Sociology and Statistics, and the Center for Statistics and the Social Sciences (CS&SS), UW Seattle offers a highly successful course "Statistical Concepts and Methods for the Social Sciences". It was designed with input from these units and a number of other social sciences departments.

The University of Washington has a strong Social Sciences division with many units in collaboration with the Department of Statistics and with CS&SS. These strengths and programs should be included in the development of this ISS program.

On our UW Seattle campus, most students earning social sciences degrees do fulfill a coursework requirement in quantitative methods and analysis. I looked into some of the programs listed in the proposal and found that many require one or more quantitative reasoning courses. Open University's and University of Wyoming's programs require two Quantitative Reasoning courses. CSUSB and WSU require at least one such course.

Another concern is that this program appears designed NOT to encourage students to study any topic area in depth, beyond one academic quarter. Students should gain depth as well as breadth in their university degree program.

June Morita

Principal Lecturer

UW Distinguished Teaching Award recipient, 1999

Dept. of Statistics

**eathomp**  
ELIZABETH A  
THOMPSON

New Post 3 Jan 16, 2014 3:28 PM

The development of an online degree program that may enable non-traditional students to complete their degrees is an important advance. However, it is also important that the degree not be perceived as significantly weaker than other UW undergraduate degrees.

The goals of the program include enabling students to "explain social scientific research", to "communicate arguments" and to "critique information", but the program contains very little opportunity for education in quantitative methods and analysis, and no requirement that students learn important transferable skills in understanding and analyzing data.

This is in sharp contrast to other UW Social Sciences degree programs such as GEOG, ECON, or SOC, all of which provide training in quantitative literacy and methodology. Existing quantitative courses that might form the basis for a component of methodological training include:  
ECON 382, 482, 483, 484, 485, GEOG 317, 326, 426,  
SOC 220, 221, 320, 328, 329, STAT 220, 311  
Some of these classes (e.g. STAT 311) are already regularly offered online.

thomasr  
THOMAS S.  
RICHARDSON

*New Post: Jan 31, 2014 4:56 PM*  
*Edited Jan 31, 2014 5:05 PM by thomasr.*

I welcome the development of an on-line Integrated Social Science Degree. This is an exciting technological innovation that may allow non-traditional students to complete their degrees.

However, I agree with other commentators that by comparison with many of the existing Social Science degrees offered by UW, the proposed ISS degree does not contain very much in the way of quantitative methods and analysis.

I think that the inclusion of some form of quantitative literacy, broadly construed, is important in order to:

- help to strengthen students' transferable skills, specifically with regard to understanding and analyzing data;
- build on the existing strength that the University of Washington Social Science Division has in this area;
- minimize the extent to which the ISS degree might be seen as qualitatively different from other Social Science degrees awarded by UW (as raised by finding above);
- help students to understand and critique the very large body of social science research that is quantitative in nature.

Lastly, for four of the thematic pathways ("Information and technological society"; "Population dynamics and movement"; "Social contexts of health and risk"; "Societies and environments") familiarity with quantitative arguments would appear to be at least a major asset, if not a necessity.

In addition to the quantitative social science courses listed above by eathomp, I would also add CSSS 321 and POLS 205 as being other relevant quantitative courses.

Thomas Richardson

Director, Center for Statistics and the Social Sciences

lawarree  
JACQUES P.  
LAWARREE

*New Post: Jan 31, 2014 4:59 PM*

I also think that a strong offering of quantitative methodological courses will help the success of this program. It is important that more quantitative courses be added soon to the program. One issue will be to make sure that the students who join the program have the opportunity to refresh their knowledge in basic mathematics and statistics before taking 3 or 400 level courses in quantitative methods.

J. Lawarree  
Economics

dowlings  
SARAH  
DOWLING

*New Post: Feb 4, 2014 3:29 PM*

I would like to echo others' concerns about how this program will be staffed. Will the lecturers hired be on multi-year contracts? If the program is staffed by lecturers, how will governance and curriculum be taken care of? If they are overseen by Arts & Sciences, but Arts & Sciences faculty are not teaching in the program, this seems problematic at best.

I also wonder whether monies from this program could be directed toward student support services. If the intention is to serve underserved student populations, surely the need for academic support will be high. As one of the previous commenters pointed out with regard to libraries, support services are already stretched thin. It seems specious to propose that these underfunded services will now take on the support of another 350-800 nontraditional students.

cfugate  
CYNTHIA S  
FUGATE

New Post Feb 4, 2014 9:11 PM

The Libraries is eager to support the expanded opportunities that this degree will provide to students whose education has been disrupted. We are committed to providing the same access to quality information resources and services for students pursuing this online degree option as we do for students in our residential programs. That said, we do have some concerns about our ability to support the broad, interdisciplinary curriculum with our existing electronic resources and staffing. E-books and streaming media, in particular, present significant challenges at this point in their evolution as our holdings in these formats are not as extensive as they are for journals. The proposal notes the importance of research as a component of the degree, which will require both better access to electronic resources and better access to subject librarians than seems envisioned in the document. Since the document states that the online program is similar to on campus offerings, it seems relevant to offer a comparison: just one subject librarian in the social sciences (and there are many) notes that in an average quarter, she provides over 55 in-person student and faculty consultations in addition to responding to about a dozen email questions *per week*—transitioning this service to an online environment and scaling it for projected growth is no small task. Data from the Libraries' 2013 Triennial Survey revealed that undergraduates who consult with a librarian report that they are better able to find information, complete their coursework and succeed academically. We are concerned that we have insufficient resources to provide a comparable level of support to online students, and particularly those who will face additional challenges as returning students. The proposal mentions connecting students with library resources via the advisors and potential partnerships have been discussed—we look forward to refining these ideas and working with ISS to identify appropriate resources to implement them.--Cynthia Fugate, Libraries

Undergraduate Curriculum Review Process for New... > Seattle: Online Bachelor of Arts degree in Inte...

Questions or Comments?  
Contact us or email [catalyst@uw.edu](mailto:catalyst@uw.edu)

## RESPONSES TO COMMENTS GENERATED BY TRI-CAMPUS REVIEW

We are grateful to have this opportunity to respond to the comments made during the tri-campus review of our proposal for ISS, the new online major in Integrated Social Sciences. We are also especially thankful to all those who took the time and care to offer considered feedback on the review website. Just as in the Faculty Senate meeting on Jan 30<sup>th</sup>, many of the comments were generous and welcoming of the ISS proposal, and these comments confirm our sense that we are on the right track with the degree design. In addition to the positive comments, the constructive engagement of the more critical responses also provides a good basis for further fine-tuning the design of the degree. In the following paragraphs we seek to explain how.

As is common in institutional reviews of this nature, most of the commentaries reflected particular disciplinary and departmental perspectives. In this case, it is important to record that most of these perspectives came from faculty in units outside the Social Sciences. Professor George Mobus drew on information systems ideas to recommend putting the social science content into its biophysical systems & sustainability context. Professor Walter Parker drew on his world-renowned expertise in education research to recommend more attention to scholarship on education in addition to the thematic areas identified in the proposal. Several faculty and the Chair from the Statistics department were joined by the Chair of the Economics department in recommending more quantitative training in the major. We think all these suggestions are important, and we believe we can build on them going forward.

As we have noted in the proposal, we will seek to develop new courses in areas that are currently underrepresented; one of these is the environment and society area in which questions of biophysical sustainability and all the associated social and political dynamics will be critical. Along with the health thematic area, developing courses on the environment and society will be a high priority as we continue to build the curriculum for the major in the second year (although we do already have a very good ANTHRO course included on "Sustainability, Culture and Society"). On the question about education-focused teaching, we will be able more immediately to add new content to ISS 301 and ISS 350 based on Professor Parker's valuable readings suggestions. (That said, while there are a number of scholars in the social sciences at UW who conduct research on education, we do not have the teaching capacity to add an additional thematic area on this topic, and, meanwhile, the other online Major in Early Childhood and Family Studies already provides potential online students with a major that is much more directly focused on education.)

On training in quantitative skills and analysis, it is important to remember that all ISS students will need to complete the general education requirement in Quantitative and Symbolic Reasoning (Q/SR). We anticipate that numerous ISS students will have already satisfied the Q/SR requirement with courses in mathematics, economics, astronomy, statistics, and other quantitative areas as part of transfer A.A. degrees. This key point noted, we still look forward to working with CSSS Director Richardson, Economics Chair Lawarree and other social science units with expertise in quantitative skills teaching in order to ensure that rigorous courses in quantitative reasoning and analysis are available to all ISS students. In response to Statistics Chair Elizabeth Thompson's specific course recommendations, we want to highlight that we already list STAT 311 as one of the online pilot courses we include in ISS. Making sure access to this course is available to ISS students will be key. Complicating this, possibly, statistics faculty member Peter Guttorp expresses

concerns that STAT 311 was developed with little input and oversight from his unit, but he may not be aware that this course is currently undergoing a thorough revision, with full input of the department and the approval of the Department Chair. In any event, we also remain very keen to work with any faculty from Statistics who might be interested in developing other online STAT courses that can directly introduce students to career and real-world relevant statistics in order to address the needs identified by June Morita.

More generally on the question of quantitative education we want to highlight that the ISS curriculum already includes a good number of other courses that foster just such skills. Most notably, there are 3 Economics courses that all focus on developing quantitative skills, as do courses in Geography (GEOG 380, and the new course on China being developed by Kam Wing Chan – one of the faculty in Social Sciences who is world renowned and frequently quoted for his statistical research on internal Chinese migration patterns) and Intl Studies (JSIS B 331). Of the 3 Economics courses, ECON 200, ECON 201 and ECON 282, the latter is now being developed by Dr. Ellis (responding to prior feedback from SCAP on ECON 382) to include much more review work on statistics before the econometrics material is introduced. We also anticipate the development of other courses in fields such as Sociology and Political Science that will contribute to this crucial learning goal.

The presence of such a significant number of high quality quantitative courses in the degree will mean that students are unlikely to graduate without taking at least one of them, *in addition* to meeting the Quantitative and Symbolic Reasoning general education requirement. On top of all this, it is also important to point out that at least 3 weeks of the *required* ISS 301 will focus on quantitative skills and the epistemological issues surrounding rigorous social science research that involve quantitative description, calculation, prediction, and modeling. In this regard, it will be good to collaborate further with interested faculty from Statistics and elsewhere who want to offer (or recommend) short online modules introducing key statistical topics and keywords for inclusion in this *required* ISS course. Overall we are confident that these diverse elements will add up to a rigorous quantitative education for students in the degree.

From a broader institutional level it should further be noted that the Social Sciences at the UW are well known for their excellence in quantitative methods and quantitative education. So this is also naturally going to be one of the domains in which the ISS major will provide a robust interdisciplinary education. At the same time, though, our goal is to go further than this and truly deliver on the promise of developing a *broad-based interdisciplinary education* with all the skills needed for 21<sup>st</sup> century citizenship. This means the degree will also provide excellent education in literacy, writing skills, online presentation skills, historical and cross-cultural interpretive understandings, and critical thinking capabilities. These skills are obviously already prominent in some of our most highly regarded and popular Social Science majors at UW, such as Anthropology, Communications, History, and Philosophy. It is the union of these varied sets of skills that will be the interdisciplinary hallmark of the ISS degree. As Dean Stacey has argued, following the pattern of Provost Cauce and Dean Hodge before him, the necessity of a broad liberal arts education remains just as critical today as it was in the 20<sup>th</sup> century. And this is precisely why it is integrated so deeply into the interdisciplinary vision of ISS.

Turning to other concerns expressed in the Tri-Campus review comments, Professor Ling Ding of the Institute of Technology at University of Washington, Tacoma, introduces some questions that are likely to arise for prospective ISS students. Happily, we are able to offer

some very clear answers to these questions about credentials, program assessment, quality, and distinctiveness:

On the question of diplomas, please be assured that they will be issued by the University of Washington and will in no way be differentiated from those of students attending courses on campus. Both the diploma and transcript will say "University of Washington," with no indication that course work was completed online.

On the question of the distinctiveness of the ISS major, it is true that an undergraduate major in general Social Sciences is currently available through the Evening Degree Program. Evening Degree offers courses scheduled in the 4:30 to 8:50 time frame for students who are unable to attend classes in the day time. In addition to Social Sciences, EDP also offers majors in Humanities, Communications, and English. The differences between the current Social Sciences degree program and Integrated Social Sciences are significant:

- ISS is not a "clone" of the existing on-campus program. Rather, it was developed specifically with an online learning environment in mind, taking full advantage of the unique capacities of online education to encourage and support specific types of learning processes and goals. In this it differs markedly not only from the EDP Social Sciences major, but also from other online degree programs in the social sciences that are cloned from existing "ground" programs.
- ISS has a rigorous core consisting of 20 credits of ISS-prefixed course work that not only introduces students systematically to social sciences theory and to a reflective (metacognitive) practice, but also sutures them into a cohesive learning community.
- ISS is further structured by the seven Thematic Areas that organize course work not around a disciplinary framework, but rather around interdisciplinary practices of examining social phenomena, questions, and problems.
- ISS has a rigorous capstone experience designed to help students create both a research project and an e-portfolio suitable for external audiences, including prospective employers. The existing Social Sciences major simply asks for completion of two 400-level courses that are not necessarily in social sciences disciplines.
- Both the ISS core and the ISS advising model work as integrative mechanisms, ensuring that students not only make academic progress, but do so in a planful, intentional fashion. The online environment provides the type of scheduling flexibility that allows students to make intellectual choices, rather than choices based on convenience or necessity..

Addressing Professor Ling Ding's concerns about learning outcomes, the integrative structures of the ISS major also work to ensure that program learning outcomes are achieved. In the final (showcase) e-portfolio, ISS students are required to demonstrate the ways in which they have mastered the four broad program learning objectives. The e-portfolio project is an ongoing act of self-assessment that is supported, "stretched," and critiqued by classmates, instructors, and advisers alike. More complete program assessment details, including information on course analytics, is on p. 38 of the proposal. The quantity and frequency of data related to student learning that is

generated by an online learning management system exceeds what is available to instructors of traditional courses. This data, interpreted by an in-house analytics and retention expert, helps instructors and advisers understand when and how student learning is happening in “real time,” creating conditions for effective intervention and for effective course revision. In short, while there may be no fool-proof way to *guarantee* that learning objectives are attained, the ISS program has structures in place supporting and assessing learning in the major.

Both Dr. Jerelyn Resnick of UW Bothell Nursing and Health Studies and Cynthia Fugate, Senior Associate Dean of Libraries, raise some valid concerns about the extent to which a significant new population of online students might overtax current library resources. It is worth noting that the ISS team has been in talks with librarians throughout the development process, and we are happy to report that many of them are excited about ISS, although reasonably alert to the potential need for additional support. Robin E. Chin Roemer, Outreach Services Librarian and Instructional Design specialist whose own position is itself already funded through EO, has provided some valuable insights into precisely where and how the impact of the ISS student population might be felt by library services, and where existing resources are sufficiently robust to absorb the additional activity. Current 24-hour online access to subject guides, bibliographies, reference works, and online scholarly articles and periodicals is currently very capable of serving the needs of new students. Areas of potential concern include:

- E-book licensing and access
- Streaming media and title-by-title video licensing
- Librarian services such as online help tutorials, virtual reference desk, personalized help from subject specialists

The degree of impact on licensing for videos and e-book access depends largely on instructional design. Based on courses under development for ISS at this time, it does appear that many faculty will be creating mostly original content for the courses, or plan to build curriculum around existing access to online articles. However, given the variety of instructional design and growing faculty interest in incorporating electronic resources, it is likely that greater demand from ISS and students in other online degree programs will be felt. Similarly, we take very seriously the findings of the Libraries’ 2013 Triennial Survey, which corroborates the experiences of UW faculty in the social sciences, that undergraduates who consult with librarians are better able to succeed academically. The ability of ISS students to interact with UW reference and subject librarians via email or live chat is, of course, crucial. Therefore, we are happy to report that the ISS budget for 2015 includes a new librarian FTE of \$65,000, projected to increase to roughly \$76,000 by 2019. If these amounts prove to be insufficient relative to the growth of the ISS student population, we will certainly revisit support levels.

Similarly, the ISS budget allocates amounts for other student services, starting in 2015 with a total of \$150,000 for specialists in the areas of admissions, financial aid, and disability services.



Finally, at least two of the comments raise questions about faculty, staffing, and governance. While we do believe that most questions regarding faculty resources and governance are adequately addressed in pp. 36-37 of the proposal, we do wish to answer an important concern: Lecturers responsible for teaching the 4 ISS core courses (ISS 301, 350, 355, 401) will be hired through a competitive process, as best practices now prescribe, for three-year terms, and those faculty will be central members of the instructional faculty for this major. Their appointments will be in appropriate academic units, depending on their own disciplinary backgrounds.

We would like to conclude these responses by noting once again our thanks to all those who offered feedback. We hope we have clarified all the areas that provoked confusion, while also putting to rest any lingering concerns about the rigor of the degree. We are eager now to put these plans into action, and to make sure we get started early enough on the student outreach and public relations work that enough applicants apply to generate a competitive admissions process. We think we need about 700 applications to do this in the first year to generate a 300 FTE enrollment, and so the sooner we can get a green light to move forward with marketing the more viable the degree will be financially. If there is any possibility of receiving a provisional OK from FCAS to begin our outreach effort, it will improve our chances of meeting our enrollment targets, and so we hope the committee might consider granting us some sort of conditional approval for this as soon as is possible.

Matt Sparke  
Director of Integrated Social Sciences  
Professor, International Studies/Geography

Judith Howard  
Divisional Dean of Social Sciences  
Professor, Sociology

*Tri-campus statements to date*

gmobus

Posted Jan 15, 2014 12:26 PM

This is likely not on anyone's radar screen, but it turns out that "limits to growth" phenomena are affecting all seven thematic areas in multifarious (integrated) ways. Has anyone considered the applicability of subjects like biophysical economics to these areas (Hall & Klitgaard, "Energy and the Wealth of Nations", Springer, New York). Imagine an outer circle encompassing the star formation labeled "Biophysical Reality". Sustainability is an ill-defined concept so a lot of assumptions should probably be reexamined in light of that fact.

jerelyn

Posted Jan 16, 2014 11:22 AM

I didn't see any information about increased resources being dedicated to library services. These vital academic support services are already being stretched very thinly across all three campuses. What will be the impact of this new degree on these services if there are no increased resources?

Staffing for the courses will be provided by tenure line faculty and lecturers. Will the lecturers be hired through a competitive process so they can be given multi-year contracts? It would be a detriment to the stability of the new degree to have some of the faculty hired only on a contingent yearly or quarterly basis.

denver

Posted Jan 26, 2014 12:05 PM

Edited Jan 29, 2014 10:37 AM by denver

Congratulations to the developers of this online social science major. The curriculum structure is impressive—complex, thoughtful, and coherent; big accomplishments. And the three integrative mechanisms are compelling, especially in combination with the target students and three “institutional interests.” Altogether a high-quality proposal with good values. I offer only a few comments, mainly about core content and reading.

Appendix A gives helpful details. The core course ISS 301 is rich, and the readings are arguably powerful (assuming the assignments are particular selections from these texts). Williams’ New Keywords models so well for students how to think about a concept. But I worry about core courses 350 and 355 due to their distance from any established academic discipline/tradition. No one has studied this much; consequently, who has the expertise to teach them? The listed texts may be too broad to be powerful. Peter Elbow’s article, “The Pedagogy of the Bamboozled” (1973), might fruitfully be paired with Freire’s book, and hopefully a good argument can ensue. Lave and Wenger’s books are too specialized and not quite pertinent, are they? Perhaps more practical and relevant (to the student’s portfolio) might be Zinsser’s *On Writing Well* (especially the chapters on Simplicity, Clutter, Audience, and Writing About Yourself) and Wilinsky’s *Learning to Divide the World*, which theorizes the formation of the social sciences and other school subjects.

In any course, core or otherwise, content selection is the central intellectual challenge for the faculty. What small sample of topics from a universe of possibilities will be selected (and then sequenced and paced) for teaching and learning? A faculty member’s expertise is the best resource, although experts are notorious for overstuffing a course (they don’t yet understand their subject well enough to simplify it). A related challenge is text selection: Which few and powerful texts deserve close reading? I suggest that close reading of a limited number of powerful texts be featured in this curriculum, with students sharing their interpretations with one another and the professor challenging them. I would give ‘close reading’ a formal place in the curriculum structure.

I wondered at Education’s absence as a thematic area or otherwise. It is itself an integrated and applied social science field. In any society, schooling is a major social institution that draws more public resources than any other save, sometimes, military and police/prisons. And, the school is a talisman: Societies everywhere try to fix social problems by reforming the school. A study of the school curriculum is one of the most reliable avenues to a society’s values and aspirations—what it considers ‘must-knows’, its beloved narratives (e.g., “a nation of immigrants”) and how it has divided phenomena into school subjects. Consider the social sciences in U.S. high schools: History definitively won the battle for curriculum space, long ago and in three containers: national (11th grade), world (10th), and state (varies, usually junior high). Rarely is geography taught any more in high school

except, curiously, for the AP Human Geography course (which is required at the high school nearest the Seattle UW campus). US Government remains a popular elective for seniors. Federalism, a 'keyword' here, helps us understand the 15,000 or so ministries of education that govern the public school curriculum in the U.S.—school districts. Moreover, schools in the U.S. have been hugely commodified in recent decades. They are asked to promote equality while preserving privilege, and to solve problems they didn't create (e.g., poverty). Teachers everywhere, like priests and social workers, embark on a mission of human improvement. They are granted tremendous status in Japan, deified almost, and denied even dignity in the U.S. This is a rich stew, worthy of study, e.g., Zimmerman's *Whose America? Culture Wars in the Public Schools*, Labaree's *Someone Has to Fail*, Cohen's *Teaching and Its Predicaments*, Bissinger's *Friday Night Lights*, Delpit's *Other People's Children*, Darling-Hammond's *The Flat World and Education*, Cremin's *The Transformation of the School: Progressivism in American Education 1876-1957*.

Walter Parker

gutturp

Posted Jan 30, 2014 9:48 AM

I am concerned with the lack of quantitative methodological courses in the program. This does not compare well to current social science degrees. Furthermore, I get the impression that the program is built on existing online courses. From my experience, these have generally been developed with little input and oversight from the corresponding academic department (that is certainly the case for STAT 311). Thus, the quality of online offerings tends to be very uneven.

Peter Gutturp

Statistics, Quantitative Ecology and Resource Management, Urban Design and Planning

lingding

Posted Jan 30, 2014 10:30 PM

A very thorough and data-based investigation is given in this proposal. This is a good program for those students who cannot attend classes in persons. Will the "online" be reflected on their diploma? How to guarantee the outcomes of online teaching? Is the online program competeable to the current social science program? If yes, why should students come to campus in persons? If no, what's the meaning of the online program?

june

Posted Jan 31, 2014 2:52 PM

This proposed ISS program seems to be lacking rigor, especially with respect to quantitative reasoning, which is critical for the ability to "analyze and evaluate data" (page 44), and to "explain social scientific research in terms of questions, theories, methods and findings" (pages 6 and 22 and of the ISS proposal).

The designers of this program should think beyond just the thematic areas to ensure students gain the important written and oral communication and quantitative skills that are needed to meet the stated goals related to "career relevance and employability" (page 43). The program should include requirements that focus on these skills. In particular, a required course that focuses on quantitative reasoning and understanding of what one can and cannot infer from data must be included in the program. Through a joint effort between the Departments of Sociology and Statistics, and the Center for Statistics and the Social Sciences (CS&SS), UW Seattle offers a highly successful course "Statistical Concepts and Methods for the Social Sciences". It was designed with input from these units and a number of other social sciences departments.

The University of Washington has a strong Social Sciences division with many units in collaboration with the Department of Statistics and with CS&SS. These strengths and programs should be included in the development of this ISS program.

On our UW Seattle campus, most students earning social sciences degrees do fulfill a coursework requirement in quantitative methods and analysis. I looked into some of the programs listed in the proposal and found that many require one or more quantitative reasoning courses. Open University's and University of Wyoming's programs require two Quantitative Reasoning courses. CSUSB and WSU require at least one such course.

Another concern is that this program appears designed NOT to encourage students to study any topic area in depth, beyond one academic quarter. Students should gain depth as well as breadth in their university degree program.

June Morita

Principal Lecturer

UW Distinguished Teaching Award recipient, 1999

Dept. of Statistics

eathomp

Posted Jan 31, 2014 3:28 PM

The development of an online degree program that may enable non-traditional students to complete their degrees is an important advance. However, it is also important that the degree not be perceived as significantly weaker than other UW undergraduate degrees.

The goals of the program include enabling students to "explain social scientific research", to "communicate arguments" and to "critique information", but the program contains very little opportunity for education in quantitative methods and analysis, and no requirement that students learn important transferable skills in understanding and analyzing data.

This is in sharp contrast to other UW Social Sciences degree programs such as GEOG, ECON, or SOC, all of which provide training in quantitative literacy and methodology. Existing

quantitative courses that might form the basis for a component of methodological training include:

ECON 382, 482, 483, 484, 485, GEOG 317, 326, 426,

SOC 220, 221, 320, 328, 329, STAT 220, 311

Some of these classes (e.g. STAT 311) are already regularly offered online.

thomasr

Posted Jan 31, 2014 4:56 PM

Edited Jan 31, 2014 6:00 PM by thomasr

I welcome the development of an on-line Integrated Social Science Degree. This is an exciting technological innovation that may allow non-traditional students to complete their degrees.

However, I agree with other commentators that by comparison with many of the existing Social Science degrees offered by UW, the proposed ISS degree does not contain very much in the way of quantitative methods and analysis.

I think that the inclusion of some form of quantitative literacy, broadly construed, is important in order to:

- help to strengthen students' transferable skills, specifically with regard to understanding and analyzing data;
- build on the existing strength that the University of Washington Social Science Division has in this area;
- minimize the extent to which the ISS degree might be seen as qualitatively different from other Social Science degrees awarded by UW (as raised by lingding above);
- help students to understand and critique the very large body of social science research that is quantitative in nature.

Lastly, for four of the thematic pathways ("Information and technological society"; "Population dynamics and movement"; "Social contexts of health and risk"; "Societies and environments") familiarity with quantitative arguments would appear to be at least a major asset, if not a necessity.

In addition to the quantitative social science courses listed above by eathomp, I would also add CSSS 321 and POLS 205 as being other relevant quantitative courses.

Thomas Richardson

Director, Center for Statistics and the Social Sciences

lawarree

Posted Jan 31, 2014 4:59 PM

I also think that a strong offering of quantitative methodological courses will help the success of this program. It is important that more quantitative courses be added soon to the program. One issue will be to make sure that the students who join the program have the opportunity to refresh their knowledge in basic mathematics and statistics before taking 3 or 400 level courses in quantitative methods.

J. Lawarree

Economics

dowlings

Posted Feb 4, 2014 3:39 PM

I would like to echo others' concerns about how this program will be staffed. Will the lecturers hired be on multi-year contracts? If the program is staffed by lecturers, how will governance and curriculum be taken care of? If they are overseen by Arts & Sciences, but Arts & Sciences faculty are not teaching in the program, this seems problematic at best.

I also wonder whether monies from this program could be directed toward student support services. If the intention is to serve underserved student populations, surely the need for academic support will be high. As one of the previous commenters pointed out with regard to libraries, support services are already stretched thin. It seems specious to propose that these underfunded services will now take on the support of another 350-800 nontraditional students.

Posted Feb 4, 2014 4:53 PM

The Libraries is eager to support the expanded opportunities that this degree will provide to students whose education has been disrupted. We are committed to providing the same access to quality information resources and services for students pursuing this online degree option as we do for students in our residential programs. That said, we do have some concerns about our ability to support the broad, interdisciplinary curriculum with our existing electronic resources and staffing. E-books and streaming media, in

particular, present significant challenges at this point in their evolution as our holdings in these formats are not as extensive as they are for journals. The proposal notes the importance of research as a component of the degree, which will require both better access to electronic resources and better access to subject librarians than seems envisioned in the document. Since the document states that the online program is similar to on campus offerings, it seems relevant to offer a comparison: just one subject librarian in the social sciences (and there are many) notes that in an average quarter, she provides over 55 in-person student and faculty consultations in addition to responding to about a dozen email questions *per week*—transitioning this service to an online environment and scaling it for projected growth is no small task. Data from the Libraries' 2013 Triennial Survey revealed that undergraduates who consult with a librarian report that they are better able to find information, complete their coursework and succeed academically. We are concerned that we have insufficient resources to provide a comparable level of support to online students, and particularly those who will face additional challenges as returning students. The proposal mentions connecting students with library resources via the advisors and potential partnerships have been discussed—we look forward to refining these ideas and working with ISS to identify appropriate resources to implement them.--Cynthia Fugate, Libraries

---