**LEP 400: Contemporary Issues Seminar**

The purpose of Contemporary Issues Seminar (CIS) is the development of creative thinking, which can be defined as the ability to identify, formulate, and solve problems using interdisciplinary perspectives. Students taking this course will use concepts and methods from different fields of study as they develop solutions to contemporary, real world problems. This broadly based, interdisciplinary approach encourages students to see the connections across academic majors, academic disciplines, and the ten learning outcomes of the Liberal Education Program. When students complete the CIS they should have a deeper, more unified understanding of their university education.

Another objective of Contemporary Issues Seminar is to provide an opportunity to conduct formative and summative assessments of the core skills of communication, critical thinking, and information literacy in our students. This assessment process begins in the First-Year Seminar and concludes in the third or fourth year when students take CIS. These two courses are the “bookends” of our Liberal Education Program.

**Creative Thinking**

*Upon completion of the Liberal Education Program at SMSU, students will be creative thinkers able to identify, formulate, and solve problems using interdisciplinary perspectives.*

1. Break a complex issue or task into incremental steps.
2. Comprehend the differences and similarities among fields of study, and how these augment our understanding of important issues.
3. Employ multiple modes of inquiry and analysis to arrive at a range of possible solutions to a problem or task.
4. Apply a range of methods for producing creative results.
5. Exhibit increasing development of characteristics essential to being a creative thinker, including:

* Curiosity
* Aesthetic appreciation
* Desire to make things better
* Enjoyment of challenge
* Ability to suspend judgment
* Acceptance of and willingness to learn from mistakes and failures

**Course Description**

Contemporary Issues Seminar is 3 credits. Students should take CIS when they have completed at least 60 credits, including at least 30 credits of the Minnesota Transfer Curriculum, as well as LEP 100: First-Year Seminar, ENG 151: Academic Writing, and SPCH 110: Essentials of Speaking and Listening.

Like First-Year Seminar, Contemporary Issues Seminar is a small, interactive course that is limited to 27 students. Also like FYS, each section of CIS has its own theme, a specific contemporary problem or issue that is chosen by the instructor. Because the course is interdisciplinary, themes must be complex enough to require a synthesis of skills and methods from different academic areas. Themes must also be sufficiently important and engaging to motivate students to work toward creative solutions to problems.

Although there is no single, required format for Contemporary Issues Seminar, the use of team teaching, co-teaching, service learning, and related methods are encouraged in order to provide interdisciplinary perspectives. Grades are based on participation and either group or individual learning projects, as well as other assessment methods chosen by the instructor.

**Proposal Form**

Instructors who are interested in teaching a section of Contemporary Issues Seminar (CIS):

1. Choose a theme for the proposed section**.** The theme should have a clear connection to creative thinking and should emphasis the core skills of critical thinking, information literacy, and communication.
2. Complete the LEP400 Proposal form and prepare a draft syllabus for approval by department of the instructor.
3. Submit an Electronic copy and 1 hard copy of the proposal form to the Dean's office in BA 268 along with a copy of the syllabus and “proposal of less than major significance” form. The proposal form is located in Part III of this manual and on the website. The less than major significance form is located on the curriculum website.

Proposals are reviewed by the Liberal Education Committee and forwarded with recommendations to the Curriculum Committee for approval.

**LEP400: Contemporary Issues Seminar Proposal**

*Part I: Click and type in the gray area to respond. The space will expand as needed.*

1. Name:

2. Phone:

3. Email:

4. What is the title for this section of Contemporary Issues Seminar?

5. Describe the theme you are proposing in a brief paragraph:

6. How will this theme be used to encourage creative thinking?

7. How will this course utilize interdisciplinary perspectives?

*Part II: Indicate your agreement with the following statements by checking the boxes.*

This class will focus on the LEP outcome of creative thinking.

This class will explore connections across all Learning Outcomes of the LEP.

This class will explore connections between academic majors and other disciplines.

This class will emphasize active, participative learning over lectures.

This class will participate in university assessment of the Core Skills of the LEP.

*Part III: Send an electronic copy of the completed form; proposal of less than major significance form; and syllabus to the* *Dean’s office in BA 268.*

Signature: Date: