

Writing Course Descriptions

The primary purpose of the course description is to clarify course content. They are used by students, prospective employers, and transfer articulators at other institutions. For ease of reading in the Catalog and to ensure clarity and succinctness, limit the course description to 50-100 words.

What to include in the course description:

- A summary of learning outcomes to demonstrate what students will be able to do effectively at the end of the course
- References to other courses to explain how content will be built upon (e.g., "uses techniques learned in XXX to explore..."). Do not reference other courses if a course is slash-listed because graduate students may not have completed the same courses as undergraduate students.
- Courses that meet the Bacc Core or Liberal Arts Core requirement should be indicated in parentheses at the end of the description (e.g., (Bacc Core Course); (FA))
 - Not counted in the word limit
- Crosslisted courses should be indicated at the end of the description (e.g., CROSSLISTED as FE 307/FOR 307)
 - Not counted in the word limit
- Sentences starting with action words like explores, examines, emphasizes, and builds. See [Bloom's Taxonomy](#) for a list of verbs.
- Words such as "including" when listing multiple items (instead of "etc")
- Clarification of language, if relevant for the content (e.g., "Taught in German")

What not to include in the course description:

- Sentences starting with "This course..." or "Students will..."
- Departmental jargon or university acronyms
- Pronouns such as, "I", "we", "you" or gendered pronouns such as "he/she"
- Unnecessary words, such as "Introduction to" or "Advanced study of" if they duplicate the course title
- Unnecessary articles (a, an, the) and introductory phrases or clauses (e.g., "Survey of," "Study of," "Introduces")
- Advising information about the fine points of requirements, exceptions, substitutions, waivers, or options
- Equivalents, prerequisites, co-requisites, credits, recommended prior knowledge, or repeatability because these items will appear next to the course in the catalog
- Registration restrictions (e.g. junior standing, XX majors, campus location), modality, fees, equipment or other requirements (e.g. CPR/first aid certificate) because they display in the Schedule of Classes and should be added to the CRN at the time of scheduling
- Content for specific groups of students (e.g., "This course is for College of Liberal Arts students")
- Material that does not clarify course content (e.g., "see Schedule of Classes," "fulfills Baccalaureate Core requirement")
- References to admissions requirements (e.g., "Meets deficiency in a foreign language requirement")
- Negation words (e.g., "but," "does not")

Examples

AGRICULTURAL SCIENCES

- Examines potential risk and crisis communications scenarios in agriculture, natural resources and environmental sciences, plus the relevant theories, models, and

processes involved in addressing these types of situations effectively. Explores the mitigation, management, and response to risks and crises from a communications perspective with special application to agriculture, natural resources and environmental sciences.

- Critically examines how data analysis can support legitimate conclusions from biological datasets and how deceptive visualizations, misleading comparisons, and spurious reasoning can lead to false conclusions. Analyzes data to break down the logical flow of an argument and identify key assumptions, even when they are not stated explicitly.
- Examines genetics and human interactions with fisheries and wildlife from an ecological and evolutionary perspective. Explores basic principles of environmental interactions as well as how humans interact with other species and their environments in the disciplines commonly recognized as fisheries, wildlife and conservation sciences.
- Examines pollinators, human influences on pollination systems, and the potential consequences of pollinator decline. An introduction to the skills needed to investigate media reports and multidisciplinary scientific research. Effects of pesticides, habitat fragmentation, climate change, invasive species, pests, pathogens, and other threats to pollinators in critical natural and agricultural systems around the world.

BUSINESS

- Examines the nature and function of law in our business society. Explores the local and international obligations arising out of agency, contract formation and breach, crimes, torts, warranty, and regulation of competition.
- Explores the issues facing a financial manager in new business ventures, small businesses, and corporations. Focuses on the role of the financial manager in business settings: financial analysis, forecasting, planning, and control; asset and liability management; capital budgeting; and raising funds for new business ventures, small businesses, and corporations.

EARTH, OCEAN, AND ATMOSPHERIC SCIENCES

- Examines population patterns and trends, emphasizing historical growth and more recent demographic changes. Use geographic tools to understand patterns of spatial distribution, use and analyze data sources, and gain experience interpreting and displaying data about population structure and dynamics. Develops the ability to evaluate the relationship between population, consumption, resources, and quality of life. Explores and analyzes patterns of consumption, as individuals and societies as well as different future scenarios with reference to environmental, social and economic sustainability.
- Applies GIS skills and techniques to determine and analyze future land uses. Determines suitable land uses that incorporate community goals, site constraints and minimize use conflicts. Includes some discussion of regulatory and market-based implementation strategies for land uses.

EDUCATION

- Explores content standards, materials and methods appropriate for high school students. Develops skills in work sample methodology through the design of effective instruction. Integrates a variety of methods with existing understandings of content area, how people learn, and the diverse communities in which they work.
- Explores the broad range of special needs that are represented in today's classrooms. Addresses various types and characteristics of disabilities as well as collaboration with specialists and families with children with special needs. Integrates discussion strategies and instructional practices to enhance the learning of diverse students in the inclusive classroom.
- Examines characteristics of standards-based content-area instruction for emergent bilinguals. Integrates content and language development, classroom-based assessment, and use of technology to support student learning.

ENGINEERING

- Applies computational techniques to solve a wide variety of fluid dynamics problems including both potential and viscous flow with requirements for computer code development.
- Analyzes nuclear light water reactor (pressurized water reactor and boiling water reactor) design and operation, including the nuclear steam supply system, engineered safety features and balance of plant systems; regulatory design requirements; industry standards; plant engineering and instrumentation drawings. Advanced reactor system designs.
- Applies 3D computer graphics methods to visually understand scientific and engineering data. Methods include hyperbolic projections; mapping scalar values to color spaces; data visualization using range sliders; scalar visualization (point clouds, cutting planes, contour plots, isosurfaces); vector visualization (arrow clouds, particle advection, streamlines); terrain visualization; Delauney triangulation; and volume visualization.

FORESTRY

- Integrates environmental, economic, and social aspects of forestry in management planning. Develops strategic and tactical plans using diverse data types and sources.
- Analyzes interactions between harvesting and road systems. Explores advanced topics in road and landing spacing, determination of road standards, analysis of logging road networks, transfer and sort yard facility location, simultaneous resource scheduling and transportation planning.
- Investigates instructional methods used to teach K-12 students about natural resources. Reveals how forest exploration can be used as a means to teach others about science, ecology, mathematics, social science, and history. Provides an opportunity for future teachers, naturalists, interpreters, and scientists to improve their teaching and communication skills.

LIBERAL ARTS

- Explores various philosophical and psychological approaches to happiness and how culturally specific ideas of happiness have shaped the social and cultural realities around the world. Explores the human need for happiness within cultures. Examines happiness through the writings of the greatest Eastern and Western philosophers. Analyzes research on happiness within positive psychology.
- Analyzes economics of discrimination, focusing on labor market inequities for women and minorities. Examines historical and current trends in pay, education, and employment disparities and explores economic explanations for such disparities, and econometric evidence for wage and employment discrimination.
- Examines and compares the role of rural policy in different cultural, political and administrative contexts at the international, national, state, regional and local levels. Explores the nature and implications of new forms of governance in rural contexts in North America and Europe.
- Focuses on women's increasing struggles with weight, eating disorders, and broader body image issues in contemporary society. Explores how social institutions such as media, medicine, and government contribute to weight bias and unhealthy standards for appearance. Examines weightism as a system of oppression that intersects with other systems of oppression including sexism, racism, classism, heterosexism, ableism, and ageism.

PHARMACY

- Explores the interdisciplinary field of nanomedicine, the use of nanoscale (1-100 nm) phenomena and materials in biomedical applications. Reviews the basic principles of nanotechnology relevant to areas such as diagnostic/molecular imaging, drug delivery, and other novel therapeutics.
- Examines factors determining the frequency and distribution of diseases in a defined population for the purpose of establishing programs to prevent and control their development and spread.

PUBLIC HEALTH AND HUMAN SCIENCES

- Explores fundamental principles relating to etiology, nature, prevention, and control of communicable and non-communicable diseases in human populations. Emphasizes disease prevention and health promotion in the high risk diseases of modern, industrialized society.
- Examines violence as a major public health issue, the effects of the media on violence, drug abuse and violence, and related public health problems in contemporary American society. Emphasizes health and the efficacy of current efforts aimed at ameliorating these problems and potential for alternative public health models for prevention and intervention.

SCIENCE

- Develops stochastic models commonly arising in statistics and operations research, such as Poisson processes, birth-and-death processes, discrete-time and continuous-time Markov chains, renewal and Markov renewal processes. Analyzes stochastic models by simulation and other computational techniques.
- Explores ecological interactions and principles in different marine habitats including the organisms (plants, invertebrates, vertebrates) found in major habitats and interactions between organisms. Examines a range of habitats: coral reefs, rocky shores, kelp forests, near-shore waters, open-ocean waters, and the deep sea. Emphasizes organism-organism interactions and how that interaction produces varying patterns of distribution, abundance, body size, diversity, stability, and succession.
- Explores the statistical interpretation of entropy, heat capacity, enthalpy of condensed phases, solution thermodynamics, liquid-solid and solid-solid phase equilibria. Considers the principles of thermodynamics governing phase stability with a focus on liquid-solid and solid-solid equilibria, and phase stability in two-component systems. Examines the relationship of Gibbs free energy to phase stability.
- Reviews insect physiology from behavioral to molecular level. Explores cellular physiology and hormonal control of molting, metamorphosis and reproduction. Compares and contrasts body functions: respiration, circulation, digestion, metabolism, and osmoregulation. Analyzes physiological basis of behavior: muscles and flight, structure and functions of the nervous system, sensory physiology and chemical communication. Relates insect physiology to general physiological principles and biorational methods of insect pest control.

VETERINARY MEDICINE

- Examines the nutritional needs of many species of veterinary importance. Emphasizes the design of feeding programs to optimize health and animal performance.
- Interactively examines the molecular basis of diseases that are transmissible between animals and humans. Emphasizes bacterial, viral and parasitic pathogens of animals and humans.

<https://apa.oregonstate.edu/writing-course-descriptions>