Understanding and Making the Most of Your Social Science Requirement

The goals of the Social Science Requirement are to allow students the opportunity to:

1. Be introduced to the study of human society, including: human thought and behavior, politics, ethics, human-environment relationships, public policy, economics, and technology;

2. Learn to think critically about social issues and problems, particularly those at the interface of society and technology;

3. Become inspired and develop the skills necessary to help solve social problems throughout their academic and professional careers.

What Counts

Any two courses taught in the Social Science & Policy Studies Department may be counted toward the Social Science Requirement, including all courses with one of the following prefixes: DEV, ECON, ENV, GOV, PSY, SD, SOC, SS, STS.

One-third unit of a Great Problems Seminar course may be counted, but only if the GPS is co-taught by a faculty member with at least a half-time appointment in the SSPS Dept.

The project preparation course SS/ID2050 may be counted toward the Social Science Requirement. However, we recommend that students use the requirement to fully explore their interest and develop a knowledge base in one or more of the following social science disciplines: economics, environmental studies, political science & law, psychology, system dynamics, or science, technology, and policy.

Students interested in obtaining WPI credit for a social science course taken at another institution should consult our transfer credit authorization policies and procedures available at: http://www.wpi.edu/academics/ssps/transfer-credit.html

What Doesn't Count

Courses taught in the Humanities & Arts Department or the School of Business do not count toward the Social Science Requirement. Courses taught in STEM Departments or programs that address social implications (e.g., CS3043, IMGD2000) do not count. The course ID3100 does not count.

Depth or Breadth?

The requirement allows students a choice of focusing on depth or breadth in the social sciences. Students who are unsure which social science disciplines are of most interest or value to them may use the requirement to explore two different areas. For example, students may take one course in economics and another in psychology, or one in environmental studies and another in government/policy. Students who have more defined interests may focus on depth, taking both an introductory and advanced course in the same discipline (e.g. Introduction to Environmental Studies and

Environmental Problems in the Developing World). Students are welcome to contact the various program directors to learn more about the different social science courses.

When

We recommend that students complete the 2-course Social Science Requirement prior to beginning their IQP. The social science courses can help students identify interests and make more informed and rewarding choices for their IQP project. They will also provide social science knowledge and analytical skills that can enable projects to succeed.

Double Counting

Courses taken to fulfill the Social Science Requirement may overlap with the distribution requirements of any major. For example, students majoring in Management are required to take two courses in economics. Those two courses can count toward both the Management major and the Social Science Requirement.

Questions?

Questions about the Social Science Requirement may be directed to our Social Science Requirement Coordinator, Prof. Lisa Stoddard (eastoddard@wpi.edu, X5284, 240 Salisbury Labs).

Want more? How about a social science minor? (You're 2/3 of the way there!)

The Social Science Requirement calls for a minimum of two courses. But students who want to *bring depth to their WPI experience and their resumes* are encouraged to use their free electives to pursue additional courses or a minor. If the two courses that count toward the SS requirement are in the same discipline, only 4 additional courses are required to obtain a minor in economics, environmental studies, psychology, law and technology, or system dynamics. For more information or questions about minors, see one of the following program liaisons:

Economics: Prof. Alex Smith (adksmith@wpi.edu, X6543, 310B Salisbury Labs)

Environmental Studies: Prof. Laureen Elgert (lelgert@wpi.edu, X5452, 310E Salisbury Labs) and Prof. Rob Krueger (krueger@wpi.edu, X5110, 223C Salisbury Labs)

Law & Technology: Prof. Kent Rissmiller (kjr@wpi.edu, X5019, 312 Salisbury Labs)

Psychology: Prof. Jeanine Skorinko (skorinko@wpi.edu, X5451, 317D Salisbury Labs)

System Dynamics: Prof. Oleg Pavlov (opavlov@wpi.edu, X5234, 310A Salisbury Labs)