

# **Re-envisioning the Comparative Gender & Multicultural (CGM) General University Requirements:**

## **A Summary of Recommendations from the Committee on Undergraduate Education (CUE)**

**May 2021**

### **CUE members who served in 2020-2021**

Donna Qualley, Chair (English)  
Olivia Chatters, Student Senator  
Brett Coleman, Human Services  
Reid Dorsey-Palmateer, Economics  
Sargun Handa, AS Senate Pro Tempe  
Ankur Handa, Student Senator  
Jasleen Kaur, Student Senator  
Monique Kerman, Art History  
Roberta Kjesrud, Writing Instruction Support program  
Caitlan Maxwell, Western Libraries  
Mark Neff, Environmental Studies  
Gerry Prody, Chemistry  
Christie Scollon, Psychology  
Richard Simon, Fairhaven & Honors program  
Kristi Tyran, Management  
Sarah Zarrow, History  
Jianying Zhang, Mathematics

Jack Herring, Vice-Provost of Undergraduate Education  
Meagan Bryson, Assistant Director, Advising Services  
Jana Schueler, Admissions Office  
Carolyn Swinburne, Registrar's Office  
Lizzy Ramhorst, Shared Governance Operations Manager

## Preface to the Report

CUE prefaces this report with two recommendations that might do more to further the university's strategic goals of "providing a transformative education," "fostering a caring and supportive environment" and "pursuing justice and equity in its policies, practices, and impacts" than any curricular change that this committee could devise. As CUE suggested in the [working draft](#) to this document, diversity/inclusion and justice/equity ask different questions and have different, only sometimes overlapping, goals. The language of diversity and inclusion is about finding ways to include more people in the existing discourse; the language of justice and equity is about changing the structure of the discourse itself so that it is more representative of everyone.

1. Make a commitment to attract, hire, and, most importantly, retain a significant number of BIPOC faculty (50, 80, or 100. . .) over the next five years. Such a concerted effort to dramatically diversify the faculty would positively change the campus culture and the teaching and learning climate—for everyone.
2. In conjunction with #1, pursue multiple opportunities for all students to acquire practices for engaging in "difficult conversations." The university might begin by developing small one or two-credit courses, taught by instructors with experience in facilitating such dialogues. These courses could develop and strengthen habits for open listening and inquiry and critical self-reflexivity, practices that could help to foster the kind of environment the university seeks to create. (See also section 4 of this document for an example).

### **(1) What CUE initially sought to improve or correct by implementing changes to the GUR requirements.**

- To do away with the artificial Western/non-Western geographical divisions in the Humanities by moving many CGM courses back into the Humanities, Social Sciences, or other appropriate GUR categories or reinventing them to fit new GUR categories.
- To begin to address BIPOC and other students' concerns by broadening the scope of the comparative gender and multiculturalism requirement to include a focus on power, equity, and justice issues (ostensibly with accompanying pedagogical and assessment practices that would demonstrate and support such a focus).

- To explicitly align the new requirements with the equity and justice language of the [University's strategic goals and mission](#).
- To open the study of this work to all disciplines.
- To increase the coherency in the GURS by narrowing the focus without increasing the number of credits and by exploring the possibility of a developmental sequence in equity and justice courses.

## **(2) Feedback from Faculty & Students to the PLEJ [Working Draft](#) and [Summary](#)**

CUE received 439 survey responses from faculty, 359 survey responses from students, and feedback from over 20 different departments, programs, and groups.

Key quantitative findings appear in Appendix 1. The data support a shift in focus to power, equity, and justice (PEJ) and suggest a preference for the structure that gives students the option of also fulfilling the PEJ GUR requirement by taking a PEJ course in the major. Information that emerged from qualitative feedback reveals a strong desire to retain a global requirement and for PEJ courses to take an intersectional approach that includes attention to race. Student feedback also indicates that students want to have choices when completing their GURs.

The qualitative feedback also surfaced a number of fears and concerns. While some of these concerns can be attributed to miscommunication or misunderstanding of the working draft, others appear to represent deeper divisions. Although we cannot assume that the strong views of individuals who chose to comment are representative of the entire campus community, we do want to note two recurring perceptions. The first concern is that these courses privilege and push a leftist, political agenda. A second concern is that these courses are focused on educating (or training) cis, white, heterosexual students. They will either do little for BIPOC students or, alternatively, they will put them at risk. These beliefs likely can't be addressed by curriculum alone. However, it is worth noting that even students who are initially intimidated by a subject or who believe a subject is unworthy of consideration or who think they already fully understand the subject may still benefit from a sensitive and systemic exploration of the scholarly and creative material.

The following set of recommendations emerged from the many insights and observations CUE received from faculty and students.

### **(3) A Proposed Structure that Includes Two Separate GUR Requirements**

CUE's revised recommendations are to replace the comparative gender and multicultural (CGM) GURs with two new requirements constituting three courses—but with no additional GUR credit requirements. One course would focus on “Global Perspectives.” The other set of courses would be a newly framed “Power, Equity, & Justice” (PEJ) requirement. One of the PEJ GUR courses could also be fulfilled by taking a PEJ course in the major.

#### ***Global Perspectives Courses in the Humanities, Social Sciences, or Sciences***

The university recognizes the value of exploring and examining the histories, perspectives, and practices of cultures beyond the US. The Global Perspectives courses focus on all cultures outside of the US and Canada. This requirement would likely incorporate many current CGM courses, many study-abroad courses, and some language and culture classes.

So as to avoid any artificial geographical separation in Humanities and Social Sciences, Global Perspectives courses in different GUR categories would be designated with a “G” (GHUM, GSSC, GSCI). G-courses would not count as part of GUR course allocations. For example, students who satisfy their Global Perspectives requirement by taking a GHUM course would still need to take three additional Humanities courses to complete their Humanities requirement. However, students could opt to take additional GHUM courses to fulfill their Humanities requirement.

#### ***Power, Equity & Justice (PEJ) GUR Courses in the Humanities, Social Sciences, or Sciences***

Power, Equity, & Justice (PEJ) courses introduce students to different disciplinary and interdisciplinary approaches to examining how power, justice, and equity operate and manifest themselves, both visibly and invisibly, along race and other intersectional axes of people's lived experience. These courses examine how people's experiences both shape and are shaped by various systemic forces and structures, their access to material resources and the means of production, and through their creative and critical expression. PEJ courses may explore how individuals and groups experience, resist, and navigate these forces and structures historically and in the present day. All GUR PEJ courses include some attention to US culture.

Students select one PEJ course from Option A and one PEJ course from Option B or Option C. Many survey respondents were supportive of a two-course model, just not the idea that one course would be a pre-requisite to another. Students can take Option A and Option B courses in any order or concurrently. Students who elect Option C (a PEJ course in the major), most likely will have completed their Option A course.

**Option A courses** are PEJ courses in the Social Sciences or courses from programs such as Women, Gender, and Sexuality Studies, Fairhaven, or other interdisciplinary programs that use social science methods and methodologies. These courses typically introduce students to important frameworks for understanding structures of power, equity, and justice.

So as not to increase the overall number of GUR credits that students must complete, CUE proposes reducing the current Social Science requirements from three to two courses and adding a required PEJ course. This change means that all students would take an Option A Social Science PEJ course. Many current courses identified by the summer task force from their catalogue descriptions were Social Science GURs that were already aligned with a power, equity and justice focus or were courses that typically draw on social science approaches.

PEJ Requirement
One PEJ course from Option A
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Option A List of SSC PEJ courses</li> </ul>
One PEJ course from Option B or Option C
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Option B List of non-SSC PEJ courses</li> <li>Option C List of Major PEJ courses</li> </ul>

**Option B** courses include PEJ courses in the Humanities (and possibly the Natural Sciences). The Humanities open important portals for understanding how power, equity, and justice manifest themselves in the ways that people experience, examine, question, and document their lives as they engage critically and creatively with their worlds.

As with the Global Perspectives courses, students would be able to select additional (Option A and B) PEJ courses to complete their Humanities or Social Sciences Requirements.

**Option C: PEJ courses in the major.** Students can also fulfill their second PEJ requirement by choosing Option C and completing a PEJ course in their major. PEJ courses in the major provide opportunities for students to examine how power, justice, and equity operate and manifest themselves, both visibly and invisibly, along race and other intersectional axes within the context of their field or discipline. Such courses also invite students to think more deeply and expansively about their own developing

professional identities. PEJ courses in the major could be developed by any interested department or more broadly by related fields, such as a PEJ course in the sciences.

Option A and option B PEJ courses would be identified with the letter A (ASSC) or B (BHUM, BSCI). (See Appendix 2).

### ***How Global Perspectives and Power, Equity & Justice Courses Affect GUR Distribution***

The following table summarizes how the new recommendations could affect GUR distribution. Students choose at least 1 course from each of the different colored sections. CUE has tried to be sensitive to concerns from many different constituencies; nevertheless the committee recognizes that these recommendations may mean some initial disruption to the SCH in some departments.

<b>GURS</b>	<b>Social Sciences</b>	<b>Humanities</b>	<b>Sciences</b>
General Requirements	2 Courses (+1 ASSC)	3 Courses	3 Courses
Take at least one Global Perspectives course (GSSC, GHU, GSCI).	GSSC	GHUM	GSCI
Take at least one Option A Power, Equity & Justice (ASSC).	Option A PEJ: ASSC		
One course from Option B (BHUM, BSCI) or Option C Power, Equity & Justice courses.		Option B PEJ: BHUM	Option B PEJ: BSCI
One course from Option B (BHUM, BSCI) or Option C Power, Equity & Justice courses.	Option C course in the major	Option C course in the major	Option C course in the major
Potential number of total courses in each GUR category.	3-4 + Major	3-5 or (3-4 + Major)	3-5 or (3-4+ Major)

## **(4) A Key Benefit of the Proposed Structure**

CUE has worked hard to construct a path that avoids the identified pitfalls of the CGMs, that addresses faculty and student feedback, and that offers multiple choices for students to navigate their GURs. Notably, the Humanities are now no longer restricted to courses in Western cultural traditions. In devising a tagged set of requirements within existing GUR categories (rather than creating separate GUR categories), students are not limited in how many global or PEJ courses they can take. Students can shape their Humanities and Social Science GUR experience in different ways. This approach avoids sending the implicit message that Global Perspectives and Power, Equity, and Justice courses are somehow separate from the “regular” work in the Humanities and Social Sciences.

## Appendix 1: Brief Summary of Quantitative Survey Data

	Quantitative Data	Faculty likely or tentatively support	Students strongly support or support
1	Shifting the focus from diversity & multiculturalism to courses that more actively & directly address systemic, racial, & structural inequity	70%	65%
2	Focusing on power, liberation equity & justice issues	75%	60%
3	Building a Developmental sequence with PLEJ-1 courses as prerequisites for PLEJ-2 courses	61%	49%
4*	Eliminating the restriction that the Humanities GUR addresses only "Western cultural traditions"  Allowing the Humanities GUR to absorb former CGM courses, thereby eliminating the assumption that the Humanities should address only "Western cultural traditions"	85%	68%
5**	Strongly prefer Model A (focus on race, racism, & antiracism) Slightly prefer Model A  Stronger preference for Model A	16% 14%	14%
6**	Strongly prefer Model B (focus on any category) Slightly prefer Model B  Stronger preference for Model B	25% 11%	25%
7	Prefer Structure 1 (Two GUR courses)	22%	38%
8	Prefer Structure 2 (Two tagged GUR courses)	27%	20%
9	Prefer Structure 3 (Grad Requirement: GUR or Major course)	51%	42%

\* The wording of #4 in the faculty and student surveys was different. The students who adapted the faculty survey for students likely felt that students needed more explanation for the problem of geographic restrictions in the Humanities. However, the questions are not exactly equivalent. The faculty version focuses on the elimination of the restriction, and the student version focuses on the (not quite accurate) action of moving CGM courses back to the Humanities, which would have the effect of eliminating the geographic restriction.

\*\*Due to survey configuration, the quantitative data for the student surveys only revealed the percentage of strong preferences for Model A or Model B; all other responses were lumped into the middle.

**Links to Quantitative Findings in the [Faculty Surveys](#) and [Student Surveys](#)**

## Appendix 2:

### Identifying Global and PEJ Courses in the University Catalogue, Viking Advisor, & ClassFinder

1. Revise the Humanities category description so that the Humanities are no longer limited to Western cultural traditions. Explain that the Humanities, Social Sciences (and possibly the Sciences) contain courses that fulfill multiple GUR requirements. Indicate what the labeling means, e.g., courses labeled with "G" can fulfill the Global Perspectives requirement or a Humanities requirement. ASSC courses can fulfill the Option A PEJ requirement or a Social Sciences requirement. BHUM (or BSCI) courses can fulfill the Option B PEJ requirement or a Humanities or Science requirement.
2. The University Catalogue and Viking Advisor should group all tagged Global Perspectives courses and all PEJ GUR courses with other Humanities, Social Science, and Science courses, but in separate sections.
3. ClassFinder will list courses under both "All GUR courses" and "Other Attributes." Students can then search for Global Perspectives or Power, Equity & Justice courses in specific GUR categories or they can search for available Global Perspectives or Power, Equity, & Justice courses in all GURs and majors.

Under "GUR Attributes"	Under Courses with "Other Attributes"	
(SSC) Social Science GUR	GP	Global Perspectives
(GSSC) Social Sciences Global Perspectives GUR	PEJA	Power, Equity, Justice, Option A
(ASSC) Social Sciences PEJ, Option A GUR	PEJB	Power, Equity Justice, Option B
	PEJC	Power, Equity, Justice, Option C
(HUM) Humanities GUR		
(GHUM) Humanities Global Perspectives GUR		
(BHUM ) Humanities PEJ, Option B		
(SCI) Natural Science GUR		
(GSCI) Natural Science Global Perspectives GUR		
(BSCI) Natural Science PEJ, Option B		



## **Appendix 3:**

### **Suggested Process for Shifting to the New Requirements**

#### **A Process for Reconfiguring and Revising CGM Courses**

1. All current CGM courses would first revert back to their appropriate GUR category.
2. Departments would then determine the appropriate next steps.
  - The course should be tagged as a Global Perspectives (G) course
  - The course should be re-envisioned and as an Option A Power, Equity, Justice (PEJ), GUR course.
  - The course should be re-envisioned as an Option B Power, Equity, & Justice GUR course.
  - The course should remain a Humanities, Social Science, or Science course.
3. Departments could decide whether they want to develop Option C PEJ courses in the major.
4. If these recommendations are accepted, department could begin developing, piloting, and assessing experimental (x97) versions of PEJ GUR and PEJ major courses before the permanent requirement is put into place.

#### **Suggestions for Course Proposals**

1. Course proposals for these courses should reflect how the proposed course intends to serve the learning of all students. We should take heed of the suggestions from the Faculty and Staff of Color Council who noted that when designing courses, faculty should consider what the experience would be like in classes for white students versus BIPOC students.
2. Catalogue course descriptions should explicitly identify the global perspectives or power, equity, & justice focus of these Social Science, Humanities, and Science courses.
3. Course proposals should include or explain how course assignments, assessments, and pedagogies in PEJ courses will support just, equitable practices.
4. CUE and ACC should explore ways to expediate the course proposal process for these courses.

#### **Next Steps and Further Considerations**

1. If the Faculty Senate decides to constitute an ad hoc faculty group for furthering CUE's work with regard to these recommendations, CUE recommends that the

group include faculty members with different kinds of expertise (scholarly, pedagogical, and life experience).

2. The university should support professional development courses and summer workshops for faculty wishing to gain more understanding about inclusive pedagogies and non-racist assessment practices. Faculty groups might want to create small dialogue groups, discussion boards, or listservs for the purpose of asking questions and sharing ideas.
3. Looking ahead, CUE and ACC might not want to give up exploring developmental approaches in the GURs; however, perhaps they should frame development differently.
  - The Faculty and Staff of Color Council also emphasized the importance of creating opportunities for students to explore identity, saying that if there is to be any kind of developmental progression, “identity needs to be first, and it needs to be done by people with training on how to do this well.” As they note, such work can be transformative. It offers a productive way to prepare students to enter into difficult conversations related to power and privilege.
  - Rather than think about development exclusively in terms of foundational subject matter, we might also think in terms of foundational practices. As noted in the Preface to this document, students would benefit from taking a course that enabled them to acquire new ways of listening and engaging in “difficult conversations” with others who have vastly different life experiences and world views. Such work can develop the rhetorical habits of reflexivity and self-examination. These courses might be offered in the context of a COM-C writing course. Alternatively, the 2-credit FIG seminar might be re-envisioned to do this kind of work. Another potential model for such a course comes from the [American University Experience \(AUx\) program](#). American university has developed a 3-credit course spread over two-semesters. The first part of the course (AUx 1) contributes to the university’s initiative for helping first-year and transfer students transition into the university. The second part of the course (AUx 2) focuses on resources and practices for engaging in difficult conversations.