

## Diversity, Identity, and Social Justice in the United States: FAQ

Q. What do we mean by diversity?

A. While diversity can have a number of bases of definition, SUNY Oswego adopts a social identity-based definition of diversity. This aligns with SUNY's definition of diversity. For greater detail, please see the following:

[https://www.oswego.edu/diversity/sites/www.oswego.edu.diversity/files/suny\\_oswego\\_strategic\\_diversity\\_and\\_inclusion\\_plan\\_2017-2022\\_11-1-2016.pdf](https://www.oswego.edu/diversity/sites/www.oswego.edu.diversity/files/suny_oswego_strategic_diversity_and_inclusion_plan_2017-2022_11-1-2016.pdf)

and

<https://www.suny.edu/diversity/about/>

Q. The category title emphasizes the United States. Does that mean connections made with questions concerning and matters of diversity, identity, and social justice outside the United States and/or critical and theoretical perspectives from outside that country are prohibited?

A. No. While the primary focus of courses in the new category must be on diversity, identity, and social justice in the United States, that does not prevent an approved course in the category from situating the history, current circumstances, and critical issues of diversity, identity, and social justice in the U.S. in relation to what has happened and is the current state of matters elsewhere. Moreover, one can imagine how theory and criticism rooted outside the United States could help guide faculty and students in addressing and thinking about diversity, identity, and social justice in the United States.

Q. Why include social justice in the title?

A. Social justice resonates with the first learning outcome, and vice-versa, helping to signal that courses in the category will "investigate or analyze the complex network of social structures and systems integral to individual and group identity formation and its role in the creation and perpetuation of a dynamic of power, privilege, and oppression in the United States." As part of its focus on the social structures and systems that work together in a complex network that creates and sustains the inequalities born of discrimination, the first learning outcome specifically enables a course to address intersectionality.

Q. Why include identity in the category title?

A. Identity resonates with the second learning outcome, and vice-versa, helping to signal that courses in the category will labor to enable students to "demonstrate an understanding of how one or more marginalized groups in the United States construct and maintain individual and group identity and the worldview underpinning it," and thus move beyond seeing marginalized individuals and groups as objects and as other. Additionally, it bears noting that the use of "identities" in the second learning outcome signals the intersectional nature of identity and identification for both individual and group, which is to say the way multiple social categories come together and in doing so inform and shape both individuals and groups in ways that need not be negative and/or discriminatory.

Q. Will an approved course in the category need to address all three elements: diversity, identity, and social justice?

A. Yes, especially given the learning outcomes. Moreover, diversity, identity, and social justice in the United States must be foundational to and a focus of the course.

Q. What will the level of approved courses be: lower division, upper division, either?

A. Consistent with other GE 21 categories such as World Awareness, approved offerings in the new category may be either lower- or upper-division courses. Furthermore, upper-division courses in the Diversity, Identity, and Social Justice in the United States category may have lower-division course prerequisites, provided those lower-division courses are approved as general education offerings.

Q. Are transfer students included, and if so, why?

A. Yes, the creation of a required local category signals the high degree of importance the SUNY Oswego faculty places on the awareness, study, and understanding of the complex and often difficult issues connected to diversity, identity, and social justice in the United States. In this case, then, important is not just for some but for all students, including transfer students. As is the case with transfer courses and other general education categories, courses taken elsewhere that are deemed equivalent to a SUNY-Oswego course that has been approved for inclusion in the Diversity, Identity, and Social Justice in the United States category can be used to meet the aforementioned local requirement.

The 28 May 2010 SUNY Memorandum to Presidents providing policy and guidance concerning the SUNY-GER states that "If a campus has local and/or programmatic general education requirements that specify the SUNY-GER areas to be met, or add course requirements beyond the 30-credit SUNY-GER, the campus shall promote student mobility within the University and timely degree attainment by providing clear and accessible information and advisement to prospective and enrolled students," including transfer students. The 13 June 2013 SUNY Memorandum to Presidents providing policy and guidance on seamless transfer requirements states that "Local general education requirements beyond the SUNY-GER shall not require a transfer student to exceed the number of credits to graduation required of native students in the same program." Clear and accessible information of the local requirement will be provided via university publications. The requirement does not require the student to exceed the number of credits to graduation that holds for native students in the same program.

Q. Can an Oswego course approved in the new category also be approved in another general education category?

A. In keeping with current practice, an Oswego course can be approved in more than one category, provided that all learning outcomes are satisfied. Also in keeping with current practice, however, a single course cannot be used by a student in more than one general education category.

One should bear in mind, too, that student learning in general education courses must be assessed when a general education category comes around in the regular three-year cycle. Courses approved in multiple categories would in all likelihood be assessed in two years of each three-year cycle.

Q. Does the new required local category increase the number of credit hours necessary in order to complete GE 21?

A. Yes, from the present total of 30-33 hours to 33-36 hours (the range accounts for the comparatively small number of students who need to take both MLL 101 and MLL 102 approved offerings in order to complete the foreign language requirement). Given the critically

important nature of the new requirement, on the one hand, and the commitment to both breadth and student choice in general education, on the other, the Council is unanimous in the increase of three hours to the total needed to complete general education.

It bears noting that courses and hours that meet general education requirements can and do also meet major program requirements. A review of the latter reveals that B.S. majors requiring a high number of hours have included within that total six, nine, and in one case twelve hours that also count toward the general education requirement. B.A. majors require fewer hours, of course, but here too each major has included in its requirements a course or courses that also count toward general education--indeed in nearly all cases it is a minimum of two courses.

Q. Can a department or program opt to infuse the Diversity, Identity, and Social Justice in the United States in its curriculum and those have their majors meet the requirement that way?

A. While the Council encourages departments and programs to infuse diversity in the United States in their majors, such infusion should not stand in place of the proposed Diversity, Identity, and Social Justice in the United States general education requirement, but rather as a complement to it.

Just as the SUNY Oswego Writing Across the Curriculum requirement in each major builds upon the SUNY General Education (SUNY-GER) basic writing requirement that is satisfied by Oswego's ENG 102, so too would an emphasis on diversity in the major build on our local Diversity, Identity, and Social Justice in the United States general education requirement.

Moreover, a course in the local general education requirement will be taken by a range of students from a number of departments and programs, thus bringing important disciplinary interests and perspectives to the discussions on the critical matter at hand.

Q. Why is AY 2022-2023 the date for the requirement to take effect?

A. While the Council had hoped the requirement would take effect beginning in the upcoming academic year, AY 2021-2022, it recognizes that it is critically important that the institution has the necessary resources to offer 2,000 seats a year in the category. Therefore, the Council thinks it necessary to identify AY 2022-2023 for the advent of the new requirement.

To be clear, the stated expectation is that the requirement will go into effect with AY 2022-2023. In the interim the Council proposes that the category be located in the student choice field of GE 21 and Degree Works, effective immediately upon approval by the Faculty Assembly and the President's signature.

Once a course has been approved by the General Education Council as a Diversity, Identity, and Social Justice in the United States offering, it can be used toward a student's completion of student choice if taken prior to AY 2022-2023. With AY 2022-2023, it would migrate along with the Diversity, Identity, and Social Justice in the United States category to the required categories group of general education.

The General Education Council stands ready to work with departments, programs, chairs and directors, and individual faculty members in order to bring the category into being once it has been approved by the Faculty Assembly and signed by the President.

Q. What about resources needed, and with them cost?

A. The Priorities and Planning Council reviewed and discussed the draft proposal, voiced its support for the creation of the new required category, and brought up the question of what it would cost. While the General Education Council recognizes that the new category will bring

about a shifting of resources if and as fewer seats are needed in the categories in the area of Student Choice, the Council also recognizes both that additional resources will be needed if the potential of the category is to be realized and that there is both an institutional commitment to support SUNY Oswego's continuing commitment to address diversity, equity, and inclusion throughout the university and a SUNY PRODiG grant that can be used to help address and answer the resources question.