

CGTH UN3600: Approaches to Global Thought

Description and objectives

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Course description:

Challenges confronting the world today require multiple perspectives, approaches, and methods to grasp their complexity and devise responses and solutions. Whether addressing the climate crisis, public health threats, global and local inequities, social problems, geopolitical tensions, or any number of other problems, all demand the expertise developed in disciplinary training as well as flexible thinking and the ability to collaborate and solve problems across disciplinary boundaries. This course places students with different majors into conversation with each other to consider the approaches of their own disciplines, learn about the methodological “tool kits” of other fields, investigate examples of transdisciplinary research, and work with their classmates to design their own problem-centered collaborative projects.

In Unit I, students investigate a series of contemporary questions from the perspective of their individual academic interests viewed in the light of their global implications, and through dialogue with their fellow students explore multiple approaches to the problems of the world in which they live. Weeks alternate between theory and praxis, with theoretical works and examples of transdisciplinary research on pressing global challenges followed by opportunities to learn by doing. The unit concludes with a two-week case study of the disciplinary, regional, and socio-cultural approaches to climate change. In Unit II, students formulate their own collaborative, transdisciplinary project proposals, which they present in the form of an analytic essay based on their research, stating their hypotheses, arguments, and potential significance of their work.

Course objectives:

- To examine and compare methods employed in disciplines in the humanities and social sciences (based on the majors of students in the class) in order to enhance awareness of *how* knowledge is built in various disciplines;
- To build global contexts into students’ questions, approaches, and projects;
- To combine theoretical readings and examples of current research, with a focus on how transdisciplinary work has the potential to shape new questions and approaches;
- To enhance the ability to synthesize in writing diverse materials, ideas, and perspectives;
- To articulate individual research interests while collaborating with classmates to create a problem-centered project proposal in the form of an analytic essay.