

Council on General Education Minutes

September 1, 2026

10:00-11:00 a.m., STV 140

Presiding: Soemer Simmons

Present: Brian Aitken, Marko Dumančić, Kristina Falbe, Gregory Ferrence, Dan Ispas, Julie Murphy, Cara Rabe-Hemp, Brian Rejack, Rocio Rivadeneyra, Jessica Sullivan, and Sally Xie

Simmons called the meeting to order at 10:02 a.m.

Action Items:

1. Introductions

Introductions were made.

2. SOC 220 Societies: The Big Picture (existing course)

- Proposed for GE28 – EHC designation
- Reviewers: Sullivan and Ferrence

The proposal was submitted by Natalie Schaad, Assistant to the Department Chairperson, Department of Sociology & Anthropology.

Ferrence thought the course could make sense in the EHC designation but had several questions. He asked if the syllabus needed to include information for GE14. Simmons responded that the course already had a GE14 designation, so they did not have to provide an additional rationale/information for GE14 beyond what was already provided. Ferrence noted the course was a 200-level course and wondered if it should have an extra look as General Education courses are typically at the 100-level. He questioned why the course was not a 100-level course but noted it was an existing course which did not have prerequisites. He was concerned if a 200-level course would potentially cause issues with community college articulation/transfer. Lastly, Ferrence noted while the anchor syllabus listed the designation's learning objectives, there was no mapping provided of the course content to the learning objectives. Overall, he approved of the course but felt it had nuances that needed to be addressed.

Sullivan agreed with Ferrence that the learning objectives needed to be mapped to the course content. She added that after reviewing the EHC designation, she felt courses in designation would grapple with bigger questions. Sullivan thought the course felt more like a history course rather than grappling with bigger questions and noted that there was no mention of discussions which seemed to be a big part of the category.

Rivadeneyra thought that the course could possibly make the case as a humanities course and asked Rejack what his thoughts were. Rejack reminded Council members that he was never crazy about the new categories and had voted against the General Education proposal when it was before the Council. He was concerned that courses that were previously considered for SS or ICL would get shoehorned into the humanities category. While he was not against a social science course being in the category, he felt the IS designation would make more sense for this course.

Rivadeneyra noted that part of the problem may be everything that is listed as part of the designation description. Ferrence responded that aligning course information with each item/objective would be helpful. Rejack questioned if the proposer had a “horse in the race” in terms of looking at the category or really trying to make the case for the designation but just did not have enough information.

Rivadeneyra responded based on the category description, she thought a case could be made for the EHC designation, but more information was needed.

Dumančić asked if the Council had a set a precedent for conditional approval. He told the Council he and Krcmarik had discussed an accelerated process, and he had contacted proponents of courses already in the queue to provide additional alignment information. This will hopefully speed up the review process and result in fewer courses being sent back for revision.

Fable wondered why the proposer chose the designation and agreed with others that the course felt more aligned with the IS designation. Aitken responded that the course had been in General Education for over ten years as a social science course. He noted the course description submitted for the EHC designation is the same as the description for its SS description and wondered what had changed to warrant a change in category. Rejack responded General Education was turning into a “thunder dome” as departments/schools competed for seats, especially considering the new budget models.

Rivadeneyra felt at the very least a rationale as to why the course was proposed for EHC rather than IS was needed as well as an alignment of assignments to the learning objectives. Ferrence noted that as the anchor syllabus is the historical record, the information needed to be explicitly stated rather than leaving individuals to read between the lines. Ferrence asked if the department had wanted the IS designation and requested the EHC designation in error. Rivadeneyra responded it was doubtful as if the department had requested the course for the IS designation, it could then have been routed through the expedited process instead of going to the full Council for review. She added that there was a blurring of the lines as historically, history was part of the social sciences area in the College of Arts and Sciences but had moved to the humanities in recent years. Rivadeneyra could see where the course could sit between those boundaries.

Sullivan made a motion to send SOC 220 back for revision with a request for alignments to the learning objectives as well as a rationale for the requested designation instead of IS. Seconded by Ferrence.

Eleven in favor, none opposed one abstained.

The motion carried.

3. MUS 239A26 Ensemble: Experimental Music (new course proposal)

- Proposed for GE14 – FA designation
- Proposed for GE28 – ELCE designation
- Reviewers: Rivadeneyra and Murphy

The proposal was submitted by Dr. Alex Stephenson, Associate Professor, School of Music.

Rivadeneyra felt the course contained the experiential learning component and added it was not a traditional instrument course. She noted that the course did not seem to have a lot of reading, the assignments were loose and overall, her biggest concern was with the rigor of the course. Aitken responded the course was just for one credit hour and that students would need to take it three times to fully meet the three-hour designation requirement. Rivadeneyra felt that made more sense and felt

better about the lack of academic weight. She felt the course definitely fulfilled the experiential learning part of the requirement and felt it maybe fulfilled the civic engagement portion. She noted the proposal did have a mapping of the learning objectives in the anchor syllabus. While the course had reflection components built into it, she was unclear if the public performance counted as the civic engagement component and felt that portion needed further addressing. In terms of the ELCE rubric, Rivadeneyra felt the course scored a definite six but was not sure if it met the minimum ELCE threshold of seven. Murphy agreed with Rivadeneyra's assessment.

Aitken asked if Rivadeneyra felt the course was close enough to be given the benefit of the doubt that it would get there in terms of the civic engagement piece. Rivadeneyra responded she would feel comfortable with that. Aitken asked if anyone had any concerns with approximately 70% of the final grade being comprised of students just showing up. Falbe responded that she felt the point was experimenting in class and if students were not there, how would they make that up. She felt there was a case for having that high of a percentage.

Aitken noted the course did have 15% geared toward written reflection and suggested it maybe could have been balanced better. He added the proposal made mention the course would apply in the new BA/BS sequence. Aitken thought General Education courses could not as part of the major's ensembles requirement and noted this may need to be clarified with the School of Music.

Rejack suggested if the Council wanted further clarification on the civic engagement component, the question should be sent back to the proposer. He added that if the Council had to work this hard to suss out if the civic engagement piece was there, the better practice would be to require the proposer to show the Council how the course is doing it. Rivadeneyra agreed and felt that it should be easy for the proposer to do so. She added once the clarification came back, she and Murphy could re-review.

A motion was made by Rivadeneyra to conditionally approve MUS 239A26 pending receipt of additional information clarifying the civic engagement component of the course. Seconded by Rabe-Hemp.

All in favor, none opposed, none abstained.

The motion carried.

4. GEO 100 Introduction to Environmental Systems (existing course proposal)

- Proposed for GE14 – NS designation
- Proposed for GE28 – SL designation
- Reviewers: Rejack and Xie

The proposal was submitted by Dr. Daniel Kpienbaareh, Assistant Professor, Department of Geography, Geology, and the Environment.

Rejack noted the course has not been offered regularly. However, the department now has a dedicated instructor and is planning to teach the course on a more regular basis. He noted the learning objectives and outcomes were listed but did not connect the dots for the Council. Less information was provided for the GE14 learning objectives/outcomes. Overall, Rejack did not have a problem with the course. While the proposal utilized an old Coursedog template that did not request a linking of the category with learning objectives, he thought it felt less problematic as the course was clearly being proposed for and belonged in the science category.

Xie added she was leaning toward approving the course and had two additional notes. When she tried to align the learning objectives with the course assessments and evaluations, she noted the course was using a lot of exams and wondered if that would be problematic. Xie also noted the course was for four credit hours and questioned why that was the case.

Rejack and Rivadeneyra responded that the course had an additional lab component, which is why it was a four-credit hour course. Aitken confirmed that was typical for science courses and added advisors had historically been subbing this course in for students to fulfill a general education requirement. Rejack asked if there was a specific lab requirement for the SL designation. Aitken responded there was not and that there was not a documented lab requirement for GE14 either.

Rejack made a motion to approve GEO 100 for both the GE14 NS designation and the GE28 SL designation. Seconded by Dumančić.

All in favor, none opposed, none abstained.

The motion carried.

5. GEO 205 Environment, Resources, and Sustainability (existing course proposal)

- Proposed for GE14 – ICL designation
- Proposed for GE28 – IS designation
- Reviewers: Aitken and Rabe-Hemp

The proposal was submitted by Dr. Daniel Kpienbaareh, Assistant Professor, Department of Geography, Geology, and the Environment.

Aitken felt the alignment of the course requirements to the learning objectives, as well as the course overview, was good but felt the course description needed work. He felt the current description would not draw interest from students and suggested the overview be used to show the impact the course topics had on life. Rabe-Hemp agreed with Aitken that the course was in good shape and felt it would be a welcome addition to the IS category.

Aitken made a motion to approve GEO 205 for the GE14 ICL designation and the GE28 IS designation with the suggestion the course description be revised. Seconded by Rabe-Hemp.

All in favor, none opposed, none abstained.

The motion carried.

6. MUS 158 Hip-Hop: Culture, History, and Practice (existing course proposal)

- Proposed for GE14 – FA designation
- Proposed for GE28 – ELCE designation
- Reviewers: Rivadeneyra and Murphy

The proposal was submitted by Dr. Angelo Favis, Professor, School of Music.

Murphy noted the course was for three credit hours and was non-repeatable for credit. It was more academic than performance based and was also requesting the IDEAS designation in addition to the two General Education designations. Murphy felt the course was straightforward in meeting the FA and

IDEAS designations but felt the course was on the bubble for her regarding the ELCE designation request.

Rivadeneyra wondered why the course was not being proposed for the CA designation as she felt it would have been a slam dunk for that category. She did not see the course fitting the ELCE designation at all. She noted the proposal listed all the possible designation learning objectives and wondered how the course could adequately and accurately address the assessment of all of them.

Murphy felt the experiential learning component would be met by the development of music piece assignment. Rivadeneyra noted she missed that assignment but felt even with this assignment, the course did not meet the minimum score of seven for the ELCE designation's scoring rubric. Rejack suggested the ELCE handbook be sent to the proposer to assist them.

A motion was made by Rivadeneyra to approve MUS 158 for the GE14 FA designation but send the course back for revision for the GE28-ELCE designation. Seconded by Aitken.

All in favor, none opposed, none abstained.

The motion carried.

7. SOC 141 The Social Fabric (new course proposal)

- Proposed for GE28 – ELCE designation

8. SOC 230 Disaster: Risk, Response, and Recovery Through a Sociological Lens (new course proposal)

- Proposed for GE28 – ELCE designation

9. POL 140 Introduction to Comparative Politics (existing course proposal)

- Proposed for GE28 – EHC designation

10. MUS 241 Text, Music, and Meaning (new course proposal)

- Proposed for GE14 – LH designation

11. GEO 235 Regional Topics (existing course)

- Proposed for GE28 – EHC designation

12. GEO 235A01 Regional Topics: Geography of Sub-Saharan Africa (existing course)

- Proposed for GE28 – EHC designation

13. GEO 235A02 Regional Topics: Geography of Latin America (existing course)

- Proposed for GE28 – EHC designation

14. GEO 235A04 Regional Topics: Geography of the Middle East and North Africa (existing course)

- Proposed for GE28 – EHC designation

15. GEO 135 World Geography (existing course)

- Proposed for GE28 – EHC designation

16. ENG 182 Public Rhetorics (existing course)

- Proposed for GE14 – HUM designation
- Proposed for GE28 – IS designation

17. SOC 250 Happiness, Wellbeing, and Society (new course)

- Proposed for GE28 – ELCE designation

18. POL 101 Citizens and Governance (existing course)

- Proposed for GE28 – ELCE designation

Action items 7-18 were administratively tabled due to time constraints.

Information Items:

19. Expedited Courses Approved for GE28: 8/21/2026-8/28/2026

<https://gened.illinoisstate.edu/gened28/implementation-plan/>

No expedited courses were approved during this time frame.

Aitken made a motion to adjourn. Seconded by Rejack.

Meeting adjourned: 10:57 a.m.

Respectfully submitted,
Soemer Simmons