

UNIV 150A/B Course Guidelines

How To Use This Document

UNIV 150A/B is a first-year learning community (FLC). Unlike other FLCs, UNIV 150A/B mostly serves first-time, first-year college students who are undeclared (i.e., they have not yet picked a major). This course's interdisciplinary focus aims to help undeclared students discover a major.

The University Studies Curriculum Committee supports the important work of teaching UNIV 150A/B by providing the following course guidelines and ongoing resources, including cocurricular opportunities, throughout the academic year.

These course guidelines clarify the required components of UNIV 150A/B, while also highlighting exemplary resources instructors may adopt and make their own. Other resources for UNIV 150A/B faculty can be found on the [First- and Second-Year Transitions \(FAST\) Canvas page for faculty](#) and on the [FAST website](#).

Course Description

Designed specifically for first-year students at Sonoma State University, UNIV 150A/B is a year-long course that provides an interdisciplinary examination of real-world issues. Through writing, research, and creative assignments, students develop analysis, research, and communication skills vital to success in college.

UNIV 150A/B is a 8-unit course that fulfills two GE areas: 1C (Oral Communication) in the fall and 1B (Critical Thinking) in the spring. Each semester, the course's 4 units include 1 unit of transitional content where students learn skills on how to succeed in college.

UNIV 150A/B has an assigned peer mentor, which will be meaningfully integrated in course content. Consult [examples of meaningful integration of peer mentors](#).

Course Format and Instructional Methods

Given the transitional curriculum of this course, it is preferred that the course be taught face-to-face.

When face to face: The course should be taught using multiple instructional methods, such as lecture, small group discussion, and oral presentations with an associated critical discussion. Typically, course topics will be introduced via a lecture incorporating interpretive discussions.

Dr. Joshua Glasgow, philosopher and Professor in the Criminology and Criminal Justice Studies program, created a [Digital Guide for Critical Thinking Courses](#).

Dr. Michelle Jolly, Professor of History, [developed resources](#) available to use in UNIV 150A/B.

No matter the modality, SSU's learning management system (LMS) should provide access to learning materials and syllabus. The [Center for Teaching and Educational Technology](#) is available for LMS support.

Student Learning Outcomes (SLOs)

Upon successful completion of this course, students will be able to:

- Define interdisciplinary studies and articulate its importance for academic and personal success
- Describe a discipline and its parts: content, method, epistemologies, theories, and assumptions
- Apply and synthesize theoretical and practical perspectives from multiple disciplines to develop a better understanding of complex issues

Transition Learning Outcomes (TLOs)

Upon successful completion of this course, students will be able to:

- Demonstrate the skills necessary to be successful and actively engaged in college
- Demonstrate skills and dispositions to develop meaningful and healthy relationships
- Develop a sense of belonging within the campus community

General Education Requirements

GE Learning Outcomes

Upon successful completion of this course, students will be able to:

- Communicate clearly in written, oral, and/or performative forms in a variety of disciplines (**Communication**, required for Area 1C: Oral Communication)
- Iteratively formulate questions for research by gathering diverse types of information; identifying gaps, correlations, and contradictions; and using sources ethically towards a creative, informed synthesis of ideas (**Information Literacy**, required for Area 1B: Critical Thinking and Area 1C: Oral Communication)
- Advance cogent and ethical arguments in a variety of genres with rigor and critical inquiry (**Argument**, required for Area 1B: Critical Thinking)
- Synthesize and apply theoretical and practical perspectives from multiple disciplines to develop an understanding of complex issues (**Integration**, required for all First-Year Learning Communities)

GE Area Content Criteria

Oral Communication (GE Area 1C, mostly met in UNIV 150A)

- Students will develop verbal and non-verbal skills required to give compelling oral presentations in English.

- Students will develop the ability to prepare oral presentations based on students' own research and composition.
- Students will develop active listening skills required to hear another's oral communication accurately.
- Students have experiences offering oral presentations both individually and as members of collaborative groups.
- Course content will consider a large variety of intellectual and cultural traditions.
- **At least 20% of the final course student evaluation** should focus on the development of oral presentations.
- **At least 40% of the final course student evaluation** should include the effectiveness of oral presentations.

Critical Thinking (GE Area 1B, mostly met in UNIV 150B)

- Students will learn to identify and analyze arguments through evaluating information, evidence, conclusions, language, reasoning, logic, and/or problem solving.
- Students will engage in and apply inductive and deductive reasoning in multiple contexts.
- Students will make a decision: develop and defend arguments through evidence-based premises and conclusions, and develop their own arguments in relation to counter-arguments.

Thematic Core

UNIV 150A/B instructors often adopt one theme for the entire UNIV 150A/B first-year learning community. For example, the course may focus on food from a variety of disciplinary and interdisciplinary perspectives (from sociology and history to kinesiology and biology).

Other FLC faculty elect to use one theme per semester to build on the transitional learning outcomes and related pedagogy. For example, the course may focus on issues of self, identity, and home in the fall and socio-historical, ecological, and global awareness in the spring.

The thematic core creates a topical through-line for students and can be used to curate the required readings and other assigned materials (e.g., podcasts, music, films, etc.).

Required Texts/Readings

All required texts/readings will be available on reserve in the Library, in Canvas, or at the University Bookstore.

Instructors should strive to assign well-written literature that covers the chosen theme(s) for UNIV 150A/B. Ideal texts cover the theme(s) while exemplifying critical thinking, integration, and/or disciplinary and interdisciplinary knowledge.

Select Texts Previously Assigned by UNIV 150A/B Instructors

Texts about Oral Communication, Critical Thinking, Interdisciplinary Studies and/or Transition Learning Outcomes

- *Academic Skills for Interdisciplinary Studies*, Joris J.W. Buis
- *College You: How to Thrive at College and Build a Foundation for Lifelong Success*, Chiara Bacigalupa, Shelly Albaum, Antonia Bacigalupa Albaum, and Gianna Albaum
- [*Exploring Public Speaking*, Barbara Tucker et al.](#)
- *Introduction to Interdisciplinary Studies*, Allen Repko
- [*Introduction to Logic and Critical Thinking*, Matthew Van Cleave](#)
- *Teach Yourself How to Learn*, Sandra McGuire
- *You Are Not So Smart*, David McRaney

Thematic Texts

- *Anthropocene Reviewed: Essays on a Human-Centered Planet*, John Green
- *Art: A Play*, Yasmina Reza (translated by Christopher Hampton)
- *Bad Indians*, Deborah A. Miranda
- *Braiding Sweetgrass*, Robin Wall Kimmerer
- *Family Style: Memories of an American from Vietnam*, Thien Pham
- *I am Malala*, Malala Yousafzai
- *Incidents in Life of a Slave Girl*, Harriet Jacobs, Frances Smith Foster, and Richard Yarborough (Eds.)
- *Readings for Diversity and Social Justice*, 5th ed., Maurianne Adams et al. (Eds.)
- *Tastes Like War: A Memoir*, Grace M. Cho
- *The Climate Book*, Greta Thunberg
- *United States Constitution: A Graphic Adaptation*, Jonathan Hennessey

Classroom Protocol

Instructors are encouraged to review [resources](#) developed by Matthew Cheney, Director of the Center for Interdisciplinary Studies, Plymouth State University when designing classroom protocol. It is also important that faculty consult with their assigned peer mentor to determine roles, responsibilities, and classroom protocol.

Course Requirements

Signature Assignments

Each semester, UNIV 150A/B faculty are required to assign at least one [signature assignment](#) that demonstrates student achievement of:

- **two** General Education Learning Outcomes (GELOs) related to GE Area 1C: Oral Communication (in the fall) or GE Area 1B: Critical Thinking (in the spring),
- the Integration GELO, and

- **two** Transition Learning Outcomes (TLOs).

Separate signature assignments may be assigned to assess the GELOs and selected TLOs each semester. For example, TLO assessment may be completed through a brief reflective writing assignment focused on students' transition to college life, academic development, or engagement with campus resources. This self-reflection can be combined with the self-reflection required of all GE signature assignments.

Signature assignments for this course can include presentations, collaborative projects, reflective writing assignments, problem-based learning activities, and other assignments that align with the specified GELOs and TLOs. All signature assignments should indicate that student work will be submitted for GE assessment. See the [GE website](#) for more information.

Co-curricular Activities

It is highly recommended for instructors to enrich UNIV 150A/B through co-curricular opportunities on and off campus during and outside of class time. UNIV 150A/B sections are usually scheduled during the same time block so that all UNIV 150A/B students benefit from shared programming. Aim to include at least one artistic experience and one experience related to the physical, life, social, and/or behavioral sciences in each semester of UNIV 150A/B.

Graded and non-graded co-curricular activities can facilitate student reflection on their experience as well as drawing connections to disciplinary and interdisciplinary perspectives. Student participation in graded co-curricular activities that occur outside of class time must include an alternate assignment for students (as they may be unable to attend).

The [Arts Integration Program](#) provides free tickets for performances at the Green Music Center for SSU students (including peer mentors) and faculty. Faculty are encouraged to contact the Arts Integration Program coordinator to explore opportunities to have visiting artists in residence come to UNIV 150A/B during class time.

UNIV 150A/B can take field trips. One excellent option is SSU's [Center for Environmental Inquiry](#) guided tours of local preserves, including the Fairfield Osborn Preserve (located less than two miles from campus). Faculty can consult with Academic Programs for field trip support.

In the middle of each fall semester, UNIV 150A/B faculty will be invited to bring their classes to the **Discover Your Major Fair**, organized by Academic Programs in partnership with the [Career Center](#). This event is tailored for undeclared students, aimed at sharing information about SSU's specific major programs and encouraging students to declare in advance of spring registration.

Toward the beginning of each spring semester, UNIV 150A/B faculty will be invited to bring their classes to the **Spring Into Success Workshop**, hosted by the [Learning and Academic Resource Center \(LARC\)](#) and other campus partners.

The [Neves-Evans Social Justice Lecture](#) also occurs each spring (usually in early April) at the Green Music Center (GMC). Tickets are free for SSU students and faculty, and may be reserved by [logging into the GMC ticket portal](#). The lecture is typically announced early in the fall semester, allowing faculty time to integrate the lecturer's research and/or creative products into their curriculum for the spring semester.

The [First- and Second-Year Transition program website](#) has more information about campus events. Peer mentors should regularly highlight current activities and opportunities.

Class Attendance and Participation

A large portion of the students' grade is dedicated to class attendance and participation. It is important to clearly define what constitutes good class participation (i.e., earning full credit) at the start of the fall semester. Remind students about these expectations as needed, including at the beginning of the spring semester.

Faculty and Peer Mentor Check-ins

It is also important to periodically check-in with students and document their class participation. Providing first-year students with positive reinforcement makes a difference for them as they develop confidence in college. Faculty are encouraged to do individual check-ins, and to support the peer mentor's efforts to hold individual check-ins with UNIV 150A/B students.

Career-related Resources

The [Career Center](#) organizes campus-wide events each semester. All students should have access to the [Career Center Student Toolkit Canvas course](#); faculty can email the Career Center to gain access themselves to pursue available resources (like Focus2Career) .

In Spring 2026, Sonoma State launched access to [LinkedIn Learning](#) for all campus community members.