

DIVERSITY STUDIES, CERTIFICATE (LIBERAL ARTS)

Requirements for an undergraduate certificate may be completed at any campus location offering the specified courses for the certificate.

Program Description

The Diversity Studies certificate is an interdisciplinary and online program of study that explores social difference and inequality related to gender, race, ethnicity, sexuality, class, aging, religion, and disability. How we experience and view the world around us, the opportunities presented to us, and even the people that we surround ourselves with are constrained by invisible and unconscious systems of power. These systems organize our schools, workplaces, healthcare systems, criminal justice system, and media, and reproduce inequality rooted in ignoring or downplaying diversity. The Diversity Studies certificate will encourage students to take an intersectional approach to expose, critique, and confront historical and contemporary sources of social inequality. This certificate will enable students to complement their existing course portfolio by providing an opportunity to deepen their knowledge around issues of difference through a broad range of interdisciplinary coursework. An interdisciplinary approach will make it easier for students to see connections across disciplines and allow them to cluster their coursework in a meaningful and related way. Given the breadth of courses currently offered through World Campus on diversity, as well as the relative flexibility of the proposed certificate, new course development is minimal. Delivery of coursework exclusively through existing online courses will allow the most flexibility to our diverse student population.

The Diversity Studies certificate is designed to encourage reflection on the ethical challenges that arise when we become aware of how privilege, power, and difference are embedded in our world and daily lives. The aim is to move the discourse away from mere tolerance, celebration or appreciation to a deeper understanding and critique of discrimination, intolerance, and inequality in the historical and contemporary global society. The certificate will provide students with skills vital to careers in fields such as human resources, non-profit agencies, social welfare, education, and health and medicine. We have designed the certificate around an intersectional perspective that invites students to see the ways that race, class, gender, disability, sexuality, etc. operate together in overlapping and conflicting ways to affect all aspects of human experience. WMNST 105N, the one PRESCRIBED course for the certificate, introduces students to this intersectional perspective and situates discussions of race, class, gender, sexuality, ethnicity, and disability within institutional spaces that include: education, the family, work, religion, the criminal justice system, and the media. After completing this course, students are then required to take 3 credits of ADDITIONAL COURSES that include: AFAM 100N, WMNST 100, WMNST 106N, and ENGL 245/WMNST 245. These courses were selected because they all explicitly take this intersectional approach to understanding social identity, privilege and inequality. After the completion of at least 6 introductory credits, students should be conversant in intersectional, feminist, and critical theory and able to:

1. Apply basic theories of identity, difference, social power and privilege to a wide range of textual and visual materials, and to their own interactions in the context of day-to-day life.
2. Critically engage how race, gender, sexuality, class, ethnicity, and disability have been constructed in the United States.

3. Consider transnational dimensions of similar dynamics and contrast these with the United States context.
4. Identify and analyze the multiple ways individuals, communities, and social movements have resisted and remade categories of identity and changed relations of power over time and space.
5. Recognize and explore the constructions of social identity.

For the 6 remaining credits for the certificate, students are given the freedom to choose SUPPORTING COURSES AND RELATED AREAS according to their particular area of interest and/or career focus, be it Human Development and Family Studies, Sociology, Anthropology or Communication Arts and Sciences. We have carefully reviewed the syllabi for all of the courses to be included in the certificate to ensure that, despite having different programmatic orientations, all adhere to a common commitment to understanding power and inequality from a social justice perspective. Given the number of online courses at our university that examine issues of diversity, it is important to allow students to select a portion of their certificate coursework based on what will be most interesting and useful to them in their academic and professional lives.

What is Diversity Studies?

Diversity Studies is an interdisciplinary academic field that is interested in examining social differences defined by culturally constructed categories of race, class, gender, religion, ethnicity, age, diversity, and other markers of identity. Diversity Studies however tends to focus on our own lived experiences, and how our perception of these markers influences personal and cultural interactions – especially our own! It investigates systems of power that organize our schools, workplaces, healthcare systems, criminal justice system, and media, many of them invisible to us. Around the globe those systems of power are organized very differently, sometimes in fundamental ways. Diversity Studies approaches differences intersectionally to expose, critique, and confront historical and contemporary sources of social and cultural conflict. This does not mean “looking past” differences; rather, looking straight at them to find the common ground and empathy that can make us better citizens.

You Might Like This Program If...

- You want to translate your curiosities, experiences, passions and interests into actionable and meaningful work.
- You seek out inclusive environments, with persons of different backgrounds, cultures, and races to understand their points of view.
- You are passionate about gender equity, human rights, and social justice.
- You want to explore how gender and sexuality play a role in culture, the arts, literature, health, politics, the sciences, law, and education.
- You see yourself as a change agent in this world!