

Urban Experience/Civic Engagement Designations

1. Urban Experience Designation: fulfilled by courses that intentionally and meaningfully utilize the resources of the Twin Cities as an “urban learning environment”
2. Civic Engagement Designation: fulfilled by courses that require work addressing critical community needs and providing benefits to the community. The learning experience must involve students directly with community members, organizations, and/or issues.

Explanation/Rationale

Overall goal: To establish a *course designation system* whereby courses that meet the criteria for urban experience and/or civic engagement (outlined below) can be highlighted in the College catalogue. Advantages of this system are (at least) threefold: 1) students can easily find courses that will expect them to interact in and with the Twin Cities and/or that will include a significant civic engagement component; 2) faculty and staff can easily find colleagues using the cities and/or doing civic engagement in their courses; 3) the distinctive nature of our urban location will be highlighted in our curriculum.

An important part of Macalester’s mission is preparing students for civic responsibility in an increasingly multicultural and urban world shaped by local, national and global forces. Given its strong local institutions, its important position in local and national markets, and its increasingly urbane and multicultural population, the Twin Cities is an ideal site for this kind of preparation. For example, the Twin Cities are home to over 100 professional and community theaters, including Penumbra (one of the oldest Black repertory theatre companies in the U.S.) and the Guthrie (the largest regional playhouse in the country), as well as a nationally known music scene. The Twin Cities has been one of the largest regional film production centers in the country. There is an active alternative film scene, and a large number of annual film festivals, including one of the largest LGBT film festivals in the U.S. We have the largest Hmong population outside of Laos, and growing Somali and Latina/o immigrant communities. One third of Minnesota’s native Indian population (more than 25,000 people) lives in the Twin Cities; this represents among the largest urban native populations in the country. Almost half of the residents of the Twin Cities identify as people of color or as multiracial. A number of influential multinational corporations (e.g., Target, 3M, Medtronic, Best Buy) have their headquarters in the Twin Cities. The curricular possibilities for linking coursework to the ways in which knowledge is produced, enacted, and/or contested in the world outside of the classroom are outstanding. Indeed, Macalester already has an extensive network of relationships with local institutions, organizations, and neighborhoods. A system that highlights courses in which students meaningfully and intentionally utilize this learning environment and learn to situate knowledge in our local communities will benefit both students and the College in innumerable ways.

In addition to setting up a system that will designate courses with a significant urban experience, we also build on both our own institutional momentum and the broader national effort to set up a course designation system for courses that emphasize civic engagement. Ostrander (2004) identifies a number of intellectually-grounded reasons why institutions of higher education are beginning to promote civic engagement, including the desire to promote citizenship and

democracy, to improve society, and to deepen student thinking about location. This national movement is consistent with Macalester's longstanding commitment to good citizenship and academic excellence. The College's intellectual commitment to this kind of pedagogy is embedded in its mission statement, which says: (Students) should be able to apply their understanding of theories to address problems in the larger community (see <http://www.macalester.edu/pericles/discussionpaper.pdf>). One important benefit of the educational experience at Macalester is the development of individuals who make informed judgments and interpretations of the broader world around them and choose actions or beliefs for which they are willing to be held accountable.

In sum, the goal of the urban experience and civic engagement course designations is to encourage our students to prepare themselves for commitment to civic responsibility in the larger world by participating in an academically rigorous and reflective set of experiences in off-campus, community settings. Courses that emphasize urban experiences and/or civic engagement not only have the potential to deepen students' academic knowledge, but also meaningfully expose them to community-based knowledge. Courses that meet the criteria described below will encourage students to learn through experience what it means to be "local," that the local is fluid (that is, that particular individual and communal identities are not static, always bleeding into something new), and that the local is global (that is, that the local is an instance of wider global relations, namely the interdependence of all things interacting through networks of power).

3. Student Learning Outcomes/Objectives

Upon completion of an urban experience course, students will:

- See the ways in which the knowledge they gain in their courses is enacted (or contested) in 'real world' situations
- Be knowledgeable about course-relevant local institutions and/or people
- Be reflective, ethical and intentional about their interactions with members of the local communities and be informed, critical consumers of locally-based (or produced) culture

Upon completion of a civic engagement course, students will:

- Have an appreciation for the strengths and the challenges that exist in different local communities (<http://www.macalester.edu/pericles/discussionpaper.pdf>)
- Show evidence that they have analyzed their experiences with community members, organizations or institutions.
- Produce research, structures, or practices designed to benefit the community.

Criteria for Course Approval (Urban Experience)

- Significant set of activities with off-campus people or institutions
- At least one substantial reading or set of readings related to local history or culture that provides relevant context for the city-based experiences
- At least one reading assignment and/or project/paper designed to encourage students to think about and reflect on their own relationship (as Macalester students and as future

socially responsible citizens) to the people or institutions they worked with and/or observed.

- Meaningful integrative project analyzing and applying the out-of-the-classroom urban experience to the in-class course material. This may be in the form of either (or both) written or oral presentations
- Attention to (and reflection on, through assignments or course activities) the ethical requirements of interacting with people and places beyond Macalester

Criteria for Course Approval (Civic Engagement) (see also http://www.macalester.edu/cst/Pericles_guidelines.pdf).

- Content: Courses must include an intentional/intellectually grounded experience including but not limited to: field work, action research or community-based research, service-learning or community-based learning, public scholarship
- Course experiences must involve students directly with community members, organizations, and/or issues
- At least one substantial assignment in which students analyze and demonstrate specific learning outcomes from their experiences
- Assessment should be multi-dimensional and represent the experiences of students, faculty and community partners.

Urban experience and civic engagement courses and course requirements must adhere to the standards for the study of (and interaction with) human participants as outlined by Macalester's Human Subjects Committee. Course designs must reflect that students are so instructed either in the syllabus or in a later handout.

In addition, in order for a course to be considered for either or both designations, the faculty member teaching the course must participate in at least one relevant professional development activity (e.g., the Urban Faculty Seminar, attendance at a conference related to civic engagement, participation in a faculty reading group, participation in the Pericles Project, etc.).

Documentation required for course designation:

- Syllabus
- 2-3 paragraph description of the ways in which your course fulfills the learning objectives and goals of the designation

Submitted by Macalester Experience Committee:

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