General Studies Thematic

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General Studies Thematic
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Program
Since 1973 General Studies Thematic (GST) has been offering above-average students who want to make the most of their freshman year an exceptional educational experience. An interdisciplinary, team-taught program that in one year satisfies thirty-three units of the General Education requirement, GST provides exciting intellectual challenge and a supportive learning environment for a small group of eager students for their first year. It is also one of the three ways an entering freshman can participate in the Honors in General Education Program. Because of the supportive community, the curriculum, and active learning experiences, you will learn more in a year than you believed possible, have an intellectual framework on which you can build the rest of your life, and make friends for years to come. You will also complete in one year requirements that most students take two years to complete and be in an excellent position to finish your undergraduate degree, whatever your major.

What is GST?
GST provides the kind of General Education program many universities are trying to figure out how to provide for all of their first year students. GST is thirty-six students and four to six dedicated faculty working their way through the cultural evolution of our species from its Paleolithic beginnings to the present. The class meets about seventeen hours a week for the whole academic year. By the end of the first week, during which we take a three-day field trip to the Ashland Shakespeare Festival, thirty-five other students and the faculty will know you and you will already be working with some of them on class assignments and your first college essay. You will be on the way to meeting your educational expectations in a community committed to realizing the academic aspirations of highly motivated freshmen. In this supportive, learning community, we turn thirty-three units of the GE requirements into a coherent, meaningful, panoramic view of civilization by relating them and placing them in a historical context. For example, we observe how population trends relate to such developments as the invention of agriculture, the rise and fall of ancient civilizations and nomadic invasions, the ravages of the Black Plague, the beginnings of the industrial revolution, and the invention of capitalist economic theory. Along the way we study the development of religion, science and philosophy, observe how the arts mirror the cultures that produce them, and study the workings of the human mind. We perform classical drama, do art, and stargaze. We meet such interesting figures as Homer, Plato, Sappho, David Hume, Jane Austen, Luther, Chinua Achebe, Jackson Pollack and Buddha.

Special Opportunities
Besides covering thirty-three units of your General Education requirement in a way that makes sense and requires minimal schedule planning, GST provides special opportunities simply not available to most first year students. For example, as a GST student you would go to Ashland, Oregon, for three days to the Ashland Shakespeare Festival, where you would see four plays and take a backstage tour — at special student rates. You would also make two field trips to San Francisco to see plays at the American Conservatory Theatre and tour major art museums in the Bay Area.

In addition, you would visit a local Trappist monastery to find out what the monastic life, chosen by many medieval people, was like. Instead of just hearing and reading about community involvement and social activism, you would be given opportunities for practicing it in schools, hospitals, and homes of the disadvantaged. Instead of struggling to build a class schedule only to end up with one that may leave you no large blocks of time between 8 in the morning and late afternoon and evening, in GST you would have a 9 a.m. to 12:30 p.m. schedule almost every day. Finally, instead of the anonymity of large lecture classes, you would find in GST a small class where both your classmates and the faculty will know you by name within a couple of days.

The Faculty
The GST faculty are professors drawn from such diverse fields as philosophy, psychology, physics, English, agriculture, music, and art. All volunteered to teach in GST because they believe the program provides the best opportunity for giving students the background and skills necessary for a good liberal arts education and for getting the most out of the rest of the university experience.

The Students
Many of your college memories will result from the students you talk to and work with. GST students are interested in new ideas, new ways of thinking and seeing, and meeting and working with unfamiliar people and problems. They are not afraid of taking risks. They love intellectual challenges and opportunities offered by the program and the university as they become independent adults. They tend to get the most they can from their experience. They like to read and read a lot.

GST students represent a normal cross-section of college freshmen — former cheerleaders, student politicians, journalists, athletes, bookworms, skateboarders, musicians, and dramatists. Their backgrounds are as diverse as California itself. Their majors range from math, computer science, and biology to music, art, and education.

The opportunity to know and study with such students is one of the most important things GST offers you; it is often cited by GST alumni as the best feature of GST.

Admission To GST
Selection and admission to GST is by application only. In February or March, GST mails a brochure and application form to all students whom Admissions and Records identifies as qualified prospects. In addition, the brochure and application form can be requested from GST by phone, mail, or from our Web site on the Internet. Selection for admission to GST is based on high school GPA (approximately 3.20 or better); exemption from or a passing score on the EPT, and exemption from or a passing score on the ELM; an application letter; and possibly a telephone interview.

If the GST program sounds interesting to you, but you do not think you have enough information to decide to apply, then call us at the GST office, send us an e-mail, or check out our Web site. Priority consideration is given to applications received before May 10th.