Designing Integrative/Interdisciplinary Assignments

What question or issue makes this assignment meaningful for students?

Your Task: Create an assignment that explicitly invites students to use two or more disciplinary perspectives in order to address a meaningful question or issue. The task needs to be complex enough to require students to engage in integrative or interdisciplinary thinking.

Questions to Consider:
- How is the task relevant for your students - why will they find it engaging?
- How will working on this task deepen or extend or complicate students’ thinking about the questions/issues at the center of your LC/LLC?
- As students work on this task, how will you guide them to notice when and how they are exercising integrative/interdisciplinary thinking?
- What are the disciplinary understandings that students will need to draw on?

Co-curricular connections
- Campus or community events
- Residence hall
- Common public issue
- Local experts and speakers
- Field trips
- Films or performances shared across courses

Course #1 disciplinary understanding
Knowledge: ability to use key elements, concepts, relationships, theories and schools of thought in the discipline
Methods: ability to engage in modes of inquiry that characterize the discipline, research methods, evidence, creation
Purpose: an understanding of the goal that drive disciplinary inquiry and the ways in which knowledge can be used
Forms: ability to use the languages and forms of communication typical of the discipline (essays, artwork, scientific reports)

Course #2 disciplinary understanding
Knowledge: ability to use key elements, concepts, relationships, theories and schools of thought in the discipline
Methods: ability to engage in modes of inquiry that characterize the discipline, research methods, evidence, creation
Purpose: an understanding of the goal that drive disciplinary inquiry and the ways in which knowledge can be used
Forms: ability to use the languages and forms of communication typical of the discipline (essays, artwork, scientific reports)


Next step in planning: What opportunities to learn, practice and refine these (i) disciplinary understandings and (ii) interdisciplinary moves will be important to build into the courses and LC?


For more information on designing transparent assignments, see: The University of Nevada Las Vegas “Transparency in Learning and Teaching Project” website. https://www.unlv.edu/provost/transparency

For more information about a framework for considering how to insure that assignments provide equitable learning opportunities to students, please see: Milner, H.R. (2011). Let’s Focus on Gaps in Opportunity, not Achievement. Education Week. Iss. May.