

GENERAL EDUCATION COMMITTEE

REPORT TO

THE ACADEMIC SENATE

GE-012-256

New GE course proposal:

Hospitality Management 3130 – The Social Life of Coffee: Cultural, Trade, Sustainability  
New GE Area 4C (Upper Division Social and Behavioral Sciences)

General Education Committee

Date: 3/11/2026

Executive Committee  
Received and Forwarded

Date: 3/11/2026

Academic Senate

Date: 3/18/2026

## Background

Explores the global journey of coffee as both a cultural practice and a powerful economic commodity. Students will trace coffee's history from its origins in Africa and the Middle East through colonial trade, industrialization, and today's specialty coffee movement. Through case studies and hands-on experiences such as coffee tasting and varietal analysis, examine how coffee shapes cultural rituals, social identities, and global connections. Special attention is given to the economics of coffee production, climate change and sustainability challenges, and debates over fair trade and equity in the industry. By engaging with coffee from farm to cup, learn to critically analyze globalization, cultural diversity, and social justice through the lens of one of the world's most influential beverages.

By the end of this course, students will be able to:

1. Analyze the historical development of coffee and its influence on global trade, colonialism, and industrialization.
2. Evaluate the cultural significance of coffee rituals and practices across diverse societies.
3. Interpret economic and quantitative data related to coffee production, consumption, and global trade flows.
4. Assess the environmental and social challenges of coffee cultivation, including sustainability and climate change impacts.
5. Critique debates over fair trade, equity, and labor rights within the coffee industry using social science perspectives.
6. Demonstrate intercultural engagement by comparing global coffee traditions and their role in shaping community and identity.
7. Communicate informed arguments about globalization and social justice through written, oral, and experiential assignments.
8. Apply sensory analysis (coffee tasting, varietal evaluation) to connect consumer experience with broader socio-economic and cultural contexts.

All sections of *The Social Life of Coffee: Culture, Trade, Sustainability* will include the following core content areas:

1. Historical & Cultural Foundations – coffee's origins, global spread, and its role in shaping cultural rituals and social identities.
2. Global Trade & Economics – supply chains, labor practices, and the political economy of coffee as a commodity.
3. Sustainability & Justice – climate change impacts, environmental sustainability, and debates on fair trade and equity.
4. Experiential Learning – coffee tasting and varietal analysis as a way to connect consumer experience with global systems.

Core assignments include the following:

- One critical essay on a historical, cultural, or global trade issue.
- One research or data-based assignment that interprets coffee-related information (trade, climate, or sustainability).
- One experiential reflection linked to coffee tasting or cultural practice.
- One final project/presentation synthesizing course themes.

This elective course addresses the following Program-Level Learning Outcomes (PLOs) at the Emphasis (E) level:

1. **Identify and apply the knowledge and skills necessary for hospitality and tourism operations.**

The course examines coffee as a global product within the hospitality and tourism sectors. Students will apply operational and cultural knowledge to understand how coffee production, trade, and service intersect with global hospitality systems and sustainability practices.

2. **Demonstrate competence in the communication skills necessary for hospitality and tourism management.**

Students will engage in written and oral communication through case analyses, presentations, and discussions on global coffee cultures, enhancing their ability to articulate ideas effectively in professional hospitality contexts.

3. **Evaluate leadership principles necessary in the diverse and global hospitality and tourism industry.**

Through exploration of leadership, ethics, and community engagement in the coffee industry, students will evaluate how socially responsible decision-making and cross-cultural understanding inform effective hospitality leadership.

Common PLOs and Unique Professional Niche:

This course shares common learning outcomes with other hospitality electives in developing global awareness, communication competence, and leadership in diverse environments. What makes this course unique is its focus on coffee as a global social, cultural, and economic phenomenon that connects hospitality management with sustainability, ethical trade, and community development. It serves a distinct professional niche by preparing students for careers in specialty coffee, café operations, and global beverage entrepreneurship, areas that integrate culture, commerce, and responsible hospitality practice.

|                                 | In-class activity | Assignment | Quizzes | Exams | Final Project |
|---------------------------------|-------------------|------------|---------|-------|---------------|
| <b>Oral Communication</b>       | X                 |            |         |       | X             |
| <b>Written Communication</b>    |                   | X          |         |       | X             |
| <b>Critical Thinking</b>        | X                 | X          | X       | X     | X             |
| <b>Quantitative Literacy</b>    |                   | X          | X       | X     | X             |
| <b>Information Literacy</b>     | X                 | X          |         |       | X             |
| <b>Civic Literacy</b>           | X                 | X          | X       | X     |               |
| <b>Intercultural Engagement</b> | X                 | X          |         | X     | X             |

**Oral Communication**

Assessment method: In-class Activities, Group Project Presentation.

Students demonstrate professional oral communication skills through class discussions and formal group presentations that require explaining and defending coffee-related cultural or sustainability strategies. Individual presenters are assessed using a rubric emphasizing organization, delivery, audience engagement, and clarity of ideas. Active participation during coffee tastings and in-class debates further develops spontaneous and professional speaking ability.

**Written Communication**

Assessment method: Individual Assignments, Final Project Report.

Students demonstrate written communication skills through analytical essays, data-based assignments, and written sections of the final group project. Written work is evaluated for coherence, logical organization, and the ability to synthesize historical, cultural, and economic perspectives on coffee into clear, evidence-based arguments.

### **Critical Thinking**

Assessment method: In-class Activities, Assignments, Quizzes, Exams, Final Project. Students apply critical thinking to evaluate the social, environmental, and ethical dimensions of the global coffee trade. Assignments and exams require analysis of multiple viewpoints, interpretation of quantitative and qualitative evidence, and the development of reasoned arguments about globalization, sustainability, and social justice.

### **Quantitative Literacy**

Assessment method: Data-based Assignments, Quizzes, Exams, Final Project. Students interpret and analyze quantitative data such as global trade flows, pricing, and production statistics. Assignments and exams measure students' ability to apply numerical reasoning and data interpretation to understand economic disparities and sustainability challenges in the coffee industry.

### **Information Literacy**

Assessment method: In-class Research Activities, Assignments, Final Project. Students locate, evaluate, and synthesize credible information from scholarly, trade, and media sources related to coffee's cultural and economic impact. Assignments and projects assess the ability to integrate appropriate evidence, properly cite sources, and use information ethically and effectively.

### **Civic Literacy**

Assessment method: In-class Activities, Assignments, Quizzes, Exams. Students explore civic responsibility and ethical issues surrounding coffee production, labor, and trade. Through questions in quizzes and exam, discussions during in-class activities and written reflections in their assignments, they evaluate how consumer choices and corporate practices influence equity, sustainability, and social justice at local and global levels.

### **Intercultural Engagement**

Assessment method: In-class Activities, Assignments, Exams, Group Project. Students demonstrate intercultural engagement by comparing global coffee traditions and service cultures through sensory analysis and field visits. Reflections and presentations assess students' ability to appreciate diverse cultural perspectives and to connect them to broader social and economic systems.

*The Social Life of Coffee: Culture, Trade, Sustainability* meets the expectations for **GE Area 4C: Upper-Division Social & Behavioral Sciences** by situating coffee as a lens for understanding global cultural practices, economic systems, and sustainability challenges. The course engages students in social science inquiry by examining coffee in historical, contemporary, and cross-cultural contexts, connecting individual consumer practices to larger social, political, and economic structures.

### **Alignment with GE Area 4C Content Expectations**

This course meets the content expectations for Area 4C by centering the study of coffee through the lens of the social and behavioral sciences. Students develop an understanding of global systems by analyzing coffee as a cultural practice and an economic commodity, situating these issues in both **historical** (origins, colonial trade, industrialization) and **contemporary contexts** (specialty coffee, fair trade, climate change).

The course introduces students to the **principles, methodologies, value systems, and ethics of social**

**scientific inquiry** through research assignments, case studies, and data analysis activities. Students are expected to critically examine social, political, and economic institutions and recognize that these systems are deeply interconnected, as demonstrated in the global coffee supply chain and its cultural significance across societies.

Finally, the course provides a **broad and integrative understanding of social problems** by showing how coffee links multiple disciplines (sociology, anthropology, economics, environmental studies). Students connect fragmented information and draw meaningful conclusions about globalization, sustainability, and cultural identity.

#### **Alignment with GE Area 4C Policy Expectations**

The course aligns with the **policy expectations** for Area 4C in the following ways:

- **Critical Thinking:** Students construct reasoned arguments about coffee's role in global systems, demonstrating inquiry and analysis from multiple perspectives.  
CLOs 1, 3, 4, 5, and 7 emphasize the development of critical thinking and analytical reasoning skills.
- **Information Literacy:** Students learn to locate, evaluate, and synthesize scholarly, industry, and quantitative sources related to coffee's economic, cultural, and environmental dimensions.  
CLOs 3, 4, and 5 strengthen students' ability to apply information literacy to social and global issues.
- **Civic Literacy / Intercultural Engagement:** Students connect civic knowledge and global responsibility by examining fair trade, labor rights, and sustainability (civic literacy) and by comparing cultural rituals of coffee across societies (intercultural engagement).  
CLOs 2, 4, 5, 6, and 7 cultivate civic awareness and intercultural understanding in global contexts.
- **Additional GE SLO (Written, Oral, or Quantitative):** Students practice clear communication through writing and presentations and apply quantitative reasoning to interpret trade and climate data.  
*CLOs 3 and 7 reinforce written, oral, and quantitative competencies appropriate for upper-division GE learning.*
- **Accessibility and Inclusiveness:** The course is designed for all students, regardless of major, and does not serve as professional preparation. It emphasizes interdisciplinary learning and general education goals.
- **Consistency with University Standards:** The syllabus includes assignments aligned with university-adopted GE rubrics to ensure that all sections of the course meet common standards.
- **Interdisciplinary Integration:** The course emphasizes the interrelationship among disciplines by connecting cultural practices, global trade, sustainability, and consumer experience in an integrative way.

### **Resources Consulted**

HRT provided both an ECO and example syllabus for the course, uploaded to Curriculog.

On November 26, 2025, General Education Committee sent out a solicitation email to the following constituencies:

- Department chairs
- Deans and associate deans

We asked to provide input via online survey to ensure that new GE course proposals aligned with the existing GE policy, including learning outcomes and concerns surrounding expertise. Responses were collected through mid-December. GE Committee received **1 responses** about this course: "Issue with (1) GE Alignment and (2) appropriateness of course content for GE students. Although there is a stated interest in "social justice," the syllabus contains no assigned readings and no indication that this is a Social Sciences course. Additionally, this course seems highly specific in terms of content; the course seems to occasionally focus on social justice, but also includes coffee tasting, which seems highly technical and specialized for a GE course."

## Discussion

GE Committee received this referral on November 13, 2025. This course is being evaluated to ensure compliance with CPP's General Education Policy (GE-001-245), passed by the Senate in 2024.

This course is applying for **GE Area 4C: Upper Division Social and Behavioral Sciences**. In addition to meeting the core subject matter requirements for this area, new courses must include the learning outcomes **Critical Thinking** and **Information Literacy**, along with meaningful assessment of those outcomes in both the ECO and the syllabus. For this upper-division GE, departments must also include either **Intercultural Engagement** or **Civic Literacy**, and one of the following: **Written Communication**, **Oral Communication**, or **Quantitative Literacy**.

This course traces coffee's global history and cultural significance while analyzing how trade, labor, climate change, and sustainability shape the coffee commodity chain and everyday rituals across societies. Students connect consumer experience to global systems through case studies and guided tastings, including varietal analysis and reflection. Assessment includes quizzes and exams, short individual assignments and reflections, a varietal observation write-up, and a group research project with a written report, presentation, and peer evaluation.

The course largely meets GE Area 4C Upper Division Social and Behavioral Sciences area requirements by centering the study of social and behavioral science by examining coffee as a cultural practice and economic commodity in both historical and contemporary settings across diverse cultural contexts. It prompts students to engage the value systems and ethics of social scientific inquiry through issues such as labor, equity, sustainability, and climate impacts, and it applies interdisciplinary concepts to specific social problems embedded in global supply chains. The main vulnerability is that the experiential tasting and industry-facing elements could be read as professional preparation, an issue discussed by committee, unless the course consistently foregrounds analysis and evidence-based inquiry rather than vocational skill-building.

The course claims the appropriate learning outcomes for each area. This course claims Oral Communication, Written Communication, Critical Thinking, Quantitative Literacy, Information Literacy, Civic Literacy, and Intercultural Engagement. GE Area 4C has a minimum requirement of including only three learning outcomes. As long as the department is prepared to provide artifacts for university-level assessment in the future, they are fine to include additional learning outcomes. But in addition to including all of the GE learning outcomes possible, several of these SLOs are layered into assignments, making it difficult to ascertain how specific learning outcomes will be measured in the assignments. This element of the proposal could be strengthened.

Through its discussion, GE Committee found that there were questions about its alignment and centering as a social behavioral sciences course, including concerns about SLOs and the audience of the course (as a GE course), agreeing with the issues which arose in consultation.

The syllabus should also include the copy of the text of the GE Meaning and Purpose Statement.

## Recommendation

On February 11, 2026, the GE Committee voted 4-5-1-1 (Conditional Accept – Revise and Resubmit – Reject – Abstain) to allow the department to **revise & resubmit** this proposal. Two members were absent.

Departments were given until March 2, 2026 to complete requested revisions to bring the proposal into compliance with relevant GE area requirements including adoption of specific GE learning outcomes and assessments.

The committee will discuss the revised proposal during the March 11, 2026 meeting and discuss if the proposal should be moved forward to vote in this curriculum cycle. A discussion and potential vote in the March 11 meeting is intended to allow sufficient time, if appropriate, for a first reading before the end of the academic year. The final recommendation will be transmitted to the Executive Committee upon conclusion of the vote.